

“FORTITUDE AND RESOLUTION”: WOMEN OF NIAGARA AND THE WAR OF
1812

by

Spencer W. Roberts
A Dissertation
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of
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in Partial Fulfillment of
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of
Doctor of Philosophy
History

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George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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DEDICATION

For Cassie and the women in my family who shaped my life

in the past, present, and future

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This project is the culmination of a process that began in 2011 when I decided to continue my education in history and my investigation of the stories of women who lived in the Niagara District during the War of 1812. I am grateful for the many individuals whose support, guidance, and patience during this ten-year quest have made the finished product a reality.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

Board of Claims for Losses.....	BCL
British Pence	p
British Pound	£
British Shilling.....	s
Library and Archives Canada	LAC
Loyal and Patriotic Society.....	LPS
United States of America.....	US

ABSTRACT

“FORTITUDE AND RESOLUTION”: WOMEN OF NIAGARA AND THE WAR OF 1812

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The experiences of women living in Upper Canada during the War of 1812 have long been visible only at the edges of traditional battle narratives and military biographies. In pre-professional histories of Upper Canada and modern military histories, women are commonly portrayed as victims who merely illustrate the brutal nature of war. This study of women’s experiences during the War of 1812 challenges existing limited portrayals of women as passive objects of “untold suffering” by expanding the historical lens to include a broader range of women’s activities made visible in official records compiled as a result of the war, particularly war loss claims. Focusing on the Niagara District as a case study, evidence found through this expanded view demonstrates that women’s lives were much more dynamic and complex than a single moment of trauma can represent. Before the outbreak of war, women were involved in the settlement and growth of the Niagara District through their acquisition of capital by land petitions and through their

integral role in frontier life. Throughout the conflict, women supported the war effort by providing information, resources, and aid to the army. They ensured the safety and survival of their families by merging households, providing mutual support, applying for aid from private organizations, and even cooperating with the enemy to procure food. Women participated in local and provincial economies by taking on additional work in farms and business when male kin were absent or deceased, applying for compensation for their wartime losses, and then using their awards to rebuild homes and purchase land. In all these activities, women were aware of and acted in accordance with their positions within the patriarchal social structures of frontier provincial life but also worked to shape those positions according to their needs and circumstances. Through an examination of the lives of women in the Niagara District, this dissertation argues that women's unique situation in Upper Canada positioned and empowered them to shape the settlement of the province, the survival of families and communities during the war, and the reconstruction of the province in the postwar years.

INTRODUCTION: “REDUCED TO ASHES”

On a cold night in December of 1813, Elizabeth Campbell and her four children stood in the snow as flames consumed their family home in Newark, Upper Canada and all their possessions within. In a letter accompanying her claim for compensation for these losses, Campbell’s agent described her dire situation:

She was driven from her house with her Infants without the propriety of saving even her own or their Clothes, and was with Mrs. William Dickson exposed for three days & nights upon the snow with the Canopy of Heaven for a covering. Her house, once the seat of hospitality and plenty, with every thing in it was set on fire, reduced to ashes before her face.¹

On every street in Newark, hundreds of women and children watched as American soldiers and the traitorous Canadian Volunteers put their torches to over eighty houses, barns, and stables. As the army prepared to retreat across the Niagara River, they set fire to anything in the area that could provide shelter for the approaching British troops and blew up the powder magazine at Fort George. The American commander was convinced that burning Newark was necessary to prevent the British from successfully re-establishing their force at Fort George in the middle of winter. Yet the soldiers abandoned the fort without dismantling its defenses, threw at least seven cannons into a ditch rather than remove or destroy them, and even left their tents standing.

¹ Alexander Wood to William Campbell, January 13, 1816, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/60E81C89-043E-468C-9F82-693996138828>.

The dramatic contrast between abandoning a military fort left intact while burning the nearby town prompted military and civilian outrage in both the United States and Britain. Days after finding the town in ashes, British Lieutenant-Colonel John Harvey wrote to American General George McClure demanding that he “state whether this atrocious act has been committed by the authority of the American Government or is the unauthorized act of any individual.”² While some Americans showed loyalty to McClure and defended him in correspondence and the press, many of the soldiers and officers recognized the folly of his actions. Brigadier-General Timothy Hopkins described to New York Governor Daniel D. Tompkins that McClure’s decisions had “disgusted the greater part of the men under his command and they have no confidence in him.”³ American newspapers, especially those with Federalist anti-war editors, denounced the act and printed first-hand accounts of the tragic night. An anonymous letter from Lewiston, New York on the Niagara River reprinted under the title “Newark Burnt!” in the *New York Evening Post* lamented, “The destruction and misery which this dastardly conduct has occasioned is scarcely to be described. [...] Not a person of any feeling but was thunderstruck at the awful picture.”⁴

² Lieutenant-Colonel Harvey to Brigadier-General McClure, December 14, 1813, in E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Documentary History of the Campaign on the Niagara Frontier in 1812-14*, vol. 8, 9 vols. (Niagara Falls: Lundy’s Lane Historical Society, 1907), 278.

³ Brigadier-General Hopkins to Governor Tompkins, December 20, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:24-25.

⁴ “Newark Burnt!,” *New-York Evening Post*, December 29, 1813, 3.

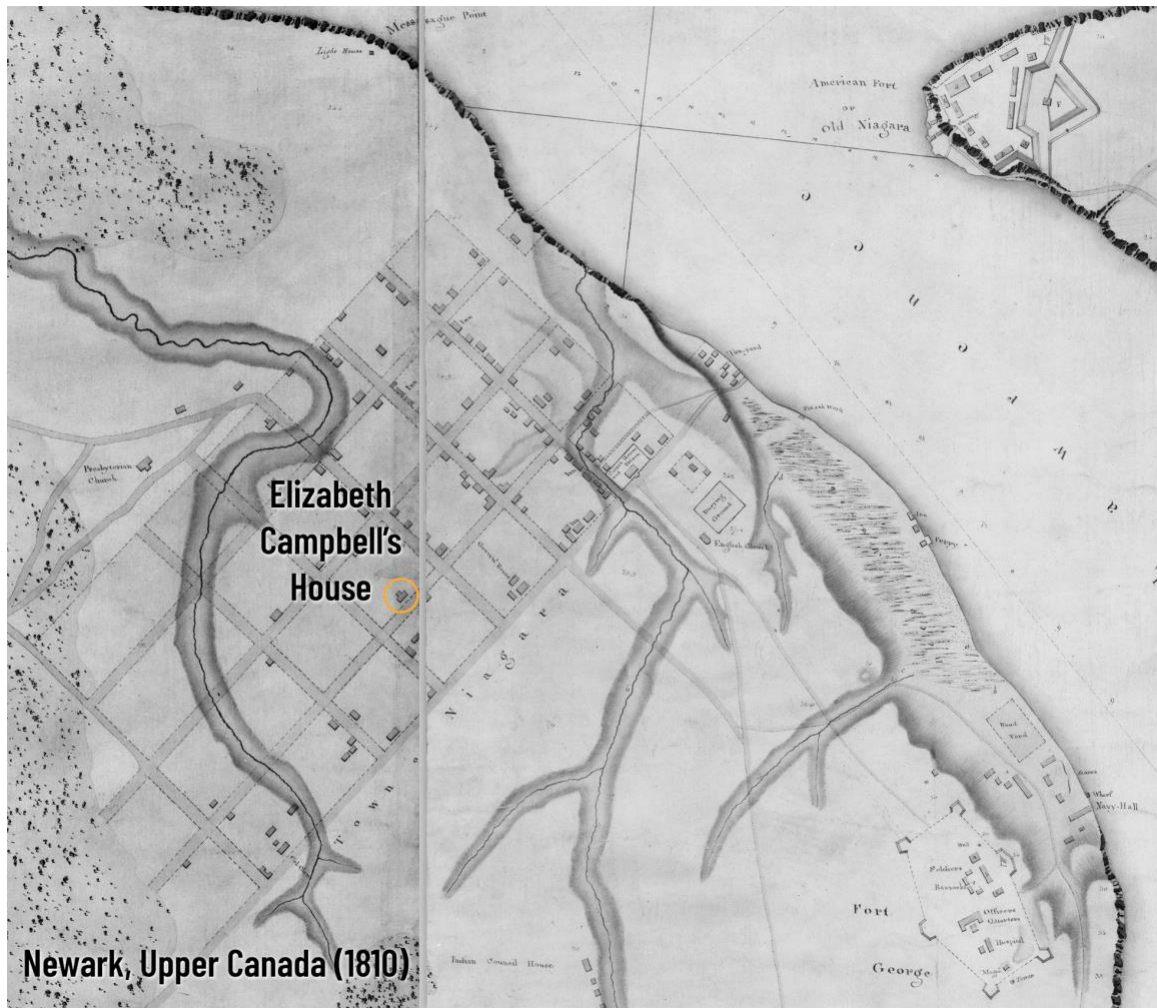


Figure 1 A. Gray, No. V, *Upper Canada Plan of Niagara* [cropped] (Quebec: Q.M. Generals Office, 1810), Map, Data and GIS Library, Brock University.

An 1810 map of Newark shows the extent of destruction caused by the fires set by the Americans and the Canadian Volunteers. The cropped section in Figure 1 shows Fort George in the bottom right, Fort Niagara in the top right, and Newark in the center. The map shows at least 100 buildings in the town, all of which were burned in 1813. A yellow circle in the center of the image indicates the location of Elizabeth Campbell's home, which was located on lots 107 and 146.

The vivid scene of Elizabeth Campbell’s experience during the burning of Newark is perhaps the most stirring example of the suffering that inhabitants of Upper Canada experienced during the War of 1812. Details of women’s harrowing experiences and losses appear in other accounts of the tragic night, but few are so eloquent or compelling. Most histories of the War of 1812—both contemporary and modern—discuss the destruction of Newark as an event that changed the tenor of the war and began a series of vengeful conflagrations of both sides of the Niagara River culminating in the British decision to burn public property including the Capitol and President’s House in Washington D.C. Despite the relative importance of Newark in the broader action of the war, however, few scholars have dwelled on the people who fought to survive sudden destruction and displacement, instead focusing on the military men who had caused the “untold suffering.”⁵ The experiences of female inhabitants, which included suffering and loss but also resiliency and perseverance, have only been “untold” because few historians have attempted to compile these stories or understand how they fit into the history of the war. In a longstanding tradition within the history of the War of 1812, historians in their depictions have focused on women’s victimhood, overlooking the broad and powerful agency they seized in responding to traumatic events.⁶

⁵ Edward Bernard Hein, “Niagara Frontier and the War of 1812” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 1949), 54.

⁶ For variations on the depiction of women as sufferers only, see also Louis L. Babcock, *The War of 1812 on the Niagara Frontier* (Cranbury, NJ: Scholar’s Bookshelf, 2005), 116-117; Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), 78; J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 193; and Wesley B. Turner, *The War of 1812: The War That Both Sides Won*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2000), 82. Taylor’s otherwise excellent overview of the war does not include any details about the inhabitants of Newark beside the fact that they were civilians. Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 252.

This study of women's experiences during the War of 1812 challenges existing limited portrayals of women as passive objects of "untold suffering" by expanding the historical lens to include a broader range of women's activities made visible in official records compiled because of the war, particularly war loss claims. Focusing on the Niagara District as a case study, evidence found through this expanded view demonstrates that women's lives were much more dynamic and complex than a single moment of trauma can represent. Before the outbreak of war, women were involved in the settlement and growth of the Niagara District through their acquisition of capital by land petitions and through their integral role in frontier life. Throughout the conflict, women supported the war effort by providing information, resources, and aid to the army. They ensured the safety and survival of their families by merging households, providing mutual support, applying for aid from private organizations, and even cooperating with the enemy to procure food. Women participated in local and provincial economies by taking on additional work in farms and business when male kin were absent or deceased, applying for compensation for their wartime losses, and then using their awards to rebuild homes and purchase land. In all these activities, women were aware of and acted in accordance with their positions within the patriarchal social structures of frontier provincial life but also worked to shape those positions according to their needs and circumstances. Through an examination of the lives of women in the Niagara District, this dissertation argues that women's unique situation in Upper Canada positioned and empowered them to shape the settlement of the province, the survival of families and communities during the war, and the reconstruction of the province in the postwar years.

Each of the modules in this dissertation begins with a moment from the life of Elizabeth Campbell, whose story is so remarkable that it could easily be mistaken for a historian's invention. Although Campbell is not meant to represent all women, surviving evidence of her life includes experiences that were shared by many other women in similar circumstances. In the first module, Campbell's arrival in the Niagara District with her husband provides a point of entry into a discussion of how the region went from an unsettled frontier to the center of provincial society and economy in fewer than twenty years. During the period of initial settlement, women played an important role in acquiring land through petitions based on their position as Loyalists or as daughters, wives, and nieces of Loyalists. The rapid expansion of settlement in Niagara resulted in population and wealth density that made it an appealing target for invasions, which in turn led to more severe wartime losses and destruction than experienced in any other district. Another result of the population density and the death or injury of many male inhabitants in the militia meant that women's experiences were suddenly made more visible in official records when widowed women became heads of households and owners of land. The first module argues that these factors combine to make the Niagara District a suitable case study for understanding how women in Upper Canada experienced and responded to the War of 1812.

The second module begins with a description of Elizabeth Campbell's losses during the war, some of which were typical of women's experiences in the Niagara District. An examination of claims for compensation of losses incurred during the war and other evidence (discussed in detail in Module 4) suggests that inhabitants of Niagara

were more likely to suffer losses than those of any other district. These records also indicate that women in Niagara experienced greater losses but were also more likely to become widowed heads of households and apply for compensation. This module argues that three primary factors contributed to these differences: first, Niagara became a focal point in the war because other American campaigns faltered, putting immense pressure on the officers in Niagara to successfully invade and capture territory in Upper Canada even if they lacked a long-term strategy. Second, the heavy use of militia in the provincial British forces meant that more men were enrolled, captured, or killed in service, leaving women to take on additional work, become responsible for their families, and step into roles previously held by men. Finally, the inhabitants of Niagara suffered from a combination of military appropriations by the British, looting by soldiers and native allies on both sides, and an unprecedented series of vengeful conflagrations.

Module Three revisits Elizabeth Campbell's story to identify the ways in which she coped with the various situations caused by the war, including her time under American occupation of Newark and her long refugee journey to find shelter with her family in Nova Scotia. Women throughout the district responded to such circumstances in different ways according to their resources and connections. Some women took on additional work on farms and in commerce when male relatives were absent, imprisoned, or killed. Most women worked closely with other community members to share resources and labor, even combining their households to reduce consumption and provide mutual support. They also supported the British army in physical altercations and by passing information. To survive in the face of loss and destruction, significant numbers of women

applied for financial aid from charitable organizations. This module argues that women played an integral role in preserving human life and property during the war, balancing the competing demands of loyalty and survival, and demonstrated that they were willing to do whatever was necessary to protect their families and communities, even if it required them to take on additional work or put their own lives at risk.

The fourth module examines the process of submitting a claim for compensation of wartime losses. Despite the strict procedural and evidentiary requirements, women overcame these restrictions to seek restitution for the losses they had incurred during the war. Women produced detailed lists of property and articles that were taken or destroyed, assigned values to each item, and worked with local magistrates to prepare the documents. To support their claims, they turned to neighbors, acquaintances, experts, and respected members of society to provide statements testifying to their losses and situations. This module argues that the claims process created a unique opportunity for women to occupy a position equal with male claimants, to demonstrate their capacity to operate within the strict bounds defined by the commissioners, and successfully acquire financial restitution for their losses. The module also explores whether social prejudices based on gender and race shaped the claims process, arguing that despite defining a process that prevented some inhabitants from making claims, the Board of Claims for Losses reviewed submitted cases and made awards without discrimination.

The fifth module argues that women's wartime activities had lasting effects on their communities and made a significant contribution to the economic and social recovery of the Niagara District after the war. The death of male inhabitants gave many

widows more control of their family's finances and property, which also increased their participation in larger social and economic networks. Evidence from the war loss claims, township papers, and family histories indicates that women who lived through the war later contributed to economic growth as consumers, builders, business proprietors, and land speculators. They also used their financial resources to provide long-term stability for their families and shaped their children's marital and profession opportunities and decisions.

The epilogue provides a summary of the previous modules and suggests areas for future research that may provide more insight into the long-term effects of women's wartime and postwar actions in the growth of the province throughout the nineteenth century. Because so few histories of the War of 1812 and Upper Canada have considered women's experiences and contributions, the arguments and conclusions set out in this dissertation are preliminary. The work of returning women's voices and lives to their rightful place in these histories is only beginning.

Historiography: An Intersection of Separate Conversations

This dissertation draws from and contributes to three distinct areas of historical research: the War of 1812 as a military campaign; the formation of Upper Canadian society and economy; and women's lives in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Studies focused on each of these areas—or a combination of two areas—contribute useful comparisons, models, and theories that have informed the discussions and analyses presented here. Layering these complementary frameworks provides a

thorough contextual and theoretical foundation for a discussion and analysis of women's experiences during the War of 1812.

Much of the early scholarship on military aspects of the War of 1812 follows a traditional model, with emphasis on military operations and battle narrative. Most narratives fall into one of two categories: military histories or popular narratives. During the war and for decades to follow, dozens of authors wrote lengthy accounts of the military actions, political causes, and outcomes of the war.⁷ Only a few of the early narratives were concerned with scholarly analysis or interpretation; most described the action in broad strokes, compiled official documents related to the war, or made political arguments suited to their audience. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, military historians began to write more scholarly studies of the war but even with the improved historical standards of documentation, citation, and analysis, most scholars have remained focused on military actions with white men at their centers.⁸

In search of the historical significance of the war, some modern historians have examined its political and economic outcomes. In one of the most thorough monographs

⁷ From 1812 to 1819, no fewer than 32 titles appeared that claimed to provide some historical view of the war. A selection of these titles is provided in the bibliography.

⁸ Military histories include Harry Lewis Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); Wesley B. Turner, *The War of 1812: The War That Both Sides Won*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2000). Biographies include John Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Timothy D. Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Wesley B. Turner, *British Generals in the War of 1812: High Command in Canadas* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Spencer Tucker, *Stephen Decatur: A Life Most Bold and Daring* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005); J. P. Riley, *A Matter of Honour: The Life, Campaigns and Generalship of Isaac Brock* (Montréal: Robin Brass Studio, 2011); James Laxer, *Tecumseh & Brock: The War of 1812* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 2012); Quentin Scott King, *Henry Clay and the War of 1812* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014); John McCavitt and Christopher T. George, *The Man Who Captured Washington: Major General Robert Ross and the War of 1812* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

to date, Alan Taylor acknowledged, “Superficially, the war seems to have been an inconsequential draw, for the peace treaty changed neither Canada's boundary nor British policies.”⁹ Taylor also suggested that “a wider and deeper perspective reveals an ultimate American victory that secured continental predominance.”¹⁰ His argument rested primarily on the continued westward American expansion after the war, which the British allowed by betraying native interests during treaty negotiations. Having forced the British to abandon the idea of an independent native buffer zone, the United States exploited North America's vast lands to gain increasing power in the international community. Yet Taylor, like other historians, confined his analyses and arguments to political, economic, and ideological consequences, primarily in the United States. The impact of the War of 1812 on societies, communities, and individuals, particularly those in the most severely devastated regions, remains relatively unexamined.

In a 2001 assessment of the historiography of the War of 1812, Donald Hickey concluded that despite new works on the war, most remained focused on military history. Hickey suggested that there was a need for more domestic, diplomatic, social, and economic histories of the war¹¹. He identified *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* by George Sheppard as the only social history of the war. In his doctoral dissertation and subsequent monograph, Sheppard investigated the war's impact on the society and economy of Upper Canada.¹² He

⁹ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 437.

¹⁰ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 437.

¹¹ Donald R. Hickey, “The War of 1812: Still a Forgotten Conflict?,” *The Journal of Military History* 65, no. 3 (July 2001): 765.

¹² George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada*

positioned his work as a response to writers who had “been reluctant to admit that the war was in any way injurious to the colony.”¹³ In contrast, Sheppard concluded that the injuries caused by enemy and allied armies “remained fresh in the minds of the inhabitants for years to come.”¹⁴ Throughout his monograph, Sheppard argued that inhabitants of Upper Canada had diverse experiences during the war that ranged from profitable military supply contracts to severe losses suffered through looting and burning. Yet he also suggested that the worst atrocities were forgotten decades later, replaced by memories of heroism and national pride. Despite his focus on the experiences of the inhabitants of Upper Canada during the war, Sheppard completely omitted any discussion or analysis of women, who made up nearly half the population of the province.

In a 1995 article, Sheppard attempted to remedy his previous exclusion of women from his social history of the war in Upper Canada. He suggested that the available evidence contradicted many postwar narratives in which women are described only as either victims or heroes and argued that women's experiences were “far more heterogeneous.”¹⁵ Yet even while Sheppard recognized that some women were affected by the devastations of war, he ultimately concluded, “A great number of women were affected only marginally by the fighting, however, and some actually benefited from the war. For some, the war brought increased profits from sales of goods to the military, as well as unprecedented opportunities for employment, courting, and excitement.”¹⁶ Rather

(Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

¹³ Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 3.

¹⁴ Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 12.

¹⁵ George Sheppard, “‘Wants and Privations’: Women and the War of 1812 in Upper Canada,” *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 28, no. 55 (1995), 159.

¹⁶ George Sheppard, “‘Wants and Privations’,” 179.

than depicting and understanding the different ways in which women experienced the war, Sheppard perpetuated their exclusion by defining a common set of experiences and downplaying the importance of any experiences that diverged from his chosen categories.

Only one other book has discussed the experiences of women during the War of 1812 in any detail. Dianne Graves provided a broad overview of women's activities and lives in her book, *In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women and War of 1812*. Unfortunately, Graves covered so many topics across the entire period and geography of the war that each woman mentioned in the book received little attention and their experiences prompted almost no analysis. Graves acknowledged in her introduction that her intent was to “provide a door into the world [...] in which these women lived, and a glimpse of the kind of people they were, the events they experienced and how the war affected their lives.”¹⁷ Although an impressive collection of evidence in which each page is filled with the names of many women and descriptions of their experiences, the book offered an informative and broad but scattered view of the war that leaves many women's lives unexplored. Furthermore, Graves praised the women who “coped with the privations, depredations and unpredictability of war, often alone or with little support” and “survived against great odds by their own efforts and determination” but provided no analysis or conclusions about how women's actions during the war should be interpreted or whether their actions had effects beyond mere survival. As the only existing collection of women's stories and narratives from the War of 1812, however, Graves's book is a

¹⁷ Dianne Graves, *In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women and the War of 1812*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Robin Brass, 2012), xi.

valuable resource to any scholar seeking a more diverse and comprehensive view of life during the war.

Although there are few studies of the War of 1812 that focus specifically on women, broader studies of Upper Canada help establish the wider context of life in the province before and after the war. Yet even though there are more social histories of early Upper Canadian life in general, few scholars have studied women's role in the development of the province. Gerald Craig's *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* provided an informative overview of the different periods of settlement and growth but Craig's narrative about the "hard work of plain people" should more accurately read "plain men," for women are rarely present in his history of Upper Canada.¹⁸ Similarly, Douglas McCalla's *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* included only a few brief references to women's work as part of the economy of the province. McCalla acknowledged that much "of the province's food and clothing either was produced at home or did not pass through the marketplace [or] was not captured by standard statistics," and that "much of the work was done by women."¹⁹ However, he also suggested that "the scale of local production and consumption would be further enlarged" if only "women's work was fully quantified and included," without offering any solution to the apparent problem.²⁰

¹⁸ Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), xiii.

¹⁹ Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 113.

²⁰ Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province*, 113. See also Douglas McCalla, *Consumers in the Bush: Shopping in Rural Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); J. K. Johnson, *In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

Fortunately, an earlier study by Marjorie Cohen (whom McCalla referenced) entitled *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* examined the extensive contributions that women made to the local and export economy of Upper Canada through their work in homes and on farms in the early nineteenth century and later through wage-work in emerging industries.²¹ Throughout this dissertation, analysis and discussion of women's position within and contribution to the provincial economy during the war is based on the Cohen's principle argument that "women's labour was directly related to the process of capital accumulation in the pre-industrial period."²² Cohen's basic thesis was further expanded in a social and feminist framework by Elizabeth Jane Errington, who argued, "It was the intersection of these various factors—their sex, where they lived, the economic and social circumstances of their families and, to some degree, when they arrived in the colony—that gave shape to women's lives, and determined the nature of their work."²³ Although neither of these studies discussed the War of 1812 and tended to focus on the latter half of the nineteenth century, they provide a contextual background of women's work in Upper Canada against which to compare how the war disrupted women's regular patterns of work and production.²⁴

²¹ Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). McCalla references Cohen's statistical and observational data regarding women's work but does not seem to incorporate her overall conclusions into his own analysis of the provincial economy.

²² Cohen, *Women's Work*, 12-13.

²³ Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 7.

²⁴ For other perspectives on Upper Canada, see David Robert Murray, *Colonial Justice: Justice, Morality and Crime in the Niagara District, 1791-1849* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Françoise Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Jane Errington,

This dissertation also engages with wider scholarship on the experiences of Loyalist and American women who lived through wars in North America during the colonial era. The Upper Canadian women who submitted claims for compensation of their wartime losses were following in the footsteps of Loyalist women who sought restitution from the Loyalist Claims Commission. Like that earlier group, the inhabitants of Upper Canada benefited from the “paternalistic attention” of the British Empire, one of the characteristics of the “spirit of 1783” described by Maya Jasanoff. In her study of Loyalist experiences in the wake of the Revolution, Jasanoff argued that the “structure of the commission especially marginalized the illiterate, the poor, and the poorly connected even while it opened up for them the tantalizing prospect of aid.”²⁵ Building on the work of Mary Beth Norton, Jasanoff also pointed out that female claimants were disadvantaged by the system, which required legal documents and specific details of their losses that women often lacked.²⁶ Furthermore, both scholars agreed that most Loyalists were disappointed in the process that awarded less than 40% of the losses claimed.

Although the “spirit of 1783” is not reflected in the United States after the Revolution, women living in the southern states used petitions to “seek the aid and protection of public men while demonstrating their continued deference to male

Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Upper Canada in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007); Julia Roberts, *In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009); J. K. Johnson, *In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014).

²⁵ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 134.

²⁶ Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1972); Mary Beth Norton, “Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 33, no. 3 (July 1, 1976): 386–409.

authority.”²⁷ Female claimants in Upper Canada share similarities with both the Loyalist claimants and petitioners in the southern United States. In her work on southern women’s petitions, Cynthia Kierner suggests that female petitioners were “neither fully empowered citizens of the republic nor its abject dependents.”²⁸ Though operating in a different context, women who submitted claims to the Loyalist Claims Commission and the Board of Claims for Losses might be described as neither fully empowered subjects of the Crown nor its abject dependents. The greatest similarity between all these women is coverture, a common-law principle in England, Upper Canada, and the United States, which empowered a married woman’s husband “to represent her in all legal and economic matters.”²⁹ Kierner also identifies factors that limited women’s ability to petition that are similar to the difficulties faced by Loyalist women. Female petitioners in the southern states may have lacked documents needed to support their cases, been unable to travel to the appropriate place to make their cases, or lacked sufficient information about when and where to submit their petitions.³⁰ These kinds of limitations, in addition to the restrictions of coverture, also shaped women’s experiences in making claims for losses they incurred during the War of 1812.

The Board of Claims for Losses (BCL) in Upper Canada was similar to the Loyalist Claims Commission and courts that received petitions but differed in ways that were significant for female and black claimants. First, the board conducted its business

²⁷ Cynthia A. Kierner, *Southern Women in Revolution, 1776-1800: Personal and Political Narratives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), xxiv.

²⁸ Kierner, *Southern Women in Revolution*, xxiv.

²⁹ Kierner, *Southern Women in Revolution*, 53.

³⁰ Kierner, *Southern Women in Revolution*, 55.

largely through documents, only requiring claimants to appear before them at York if additional testimony was required. This meant that women did not have to travel in order to submit a claim and had the opportunity to prepare their statements, lists of articles lost, and evidence before submission. While a majority of the female claimants were illiterate, they were able to submit claims with the help of justices of the peace and agents. In terms of literacy, women who submitted claims to the BCL are dissimilar to female petitioners in southern states following the Revolution, nearly half of whom were literate.³¹ Women in Upper Canada were also able to seek help in determining the value of their homes and property before submission, meaning that most were unlikely to be questioned in person about their knowledge of values and prices. Witness statements were also sworn before a justice and submitted in writing, meaning that women could assemble expert and eyewitness testimony without requiring their supporters to travel to York.

Second, the BCL had a much lower threshold for proof than the Loyalist Claims Commission. Only rarely were claimants required to submit official documents such as deeds or bills of sale in support of their claims. Most of the evidence provided was in the form of sworn statements and affidavits from neighbors, respected members of the community, or experts such as carpenters who attested to the value of goods. For instance, Jane Bunting submitted a claim for her house in St. David's, which was burned by American soldiers in 1814. The commissioners awarded her nearly the full amount of her claim based on the testimony of one local merchant and three carpenters who had "taken a survey of the Dwelling House" and determined that the value assigned was just

³¹ Kierner, *Southern Women in Revolution*, 53.

and reasonable.³² Due to these relatively straightforward requirements for evidence, only 10% of female claimants received no payment on their claims.³³ Similarly, although only six black claimants sought restitution from the commission, all of their claims were approved for awards.

For these reasons, the BCL might represent one of the most generous government boards of claims operating under the “spirit of 1783.” It is possible that the commissioners of the BCL recalled the disappointing results of the Loyalist Claims Commission and defined a more equitable procedure for dealing with the losses incurred during the War of 1812. Yet the claimants to the BCL were similarly disappointed by the decade of delays and limited availability of funds that meant most received only 35% of their awards. While access to the claims process had improved during the forty years since the first war claims commission, the promises of a paternalistic British Empire remained unfulfilled.

Another significant difference between the experiences of Loyalist women during the Revolution and women in Upper Canada is that the former group shared a “common refugee experience.”³⁴ Because the treaty that ended the War of 1812 reaffirmed pre-war national boundaries, most of the women in Upper Canada who suffered displacement due to the destruction of their homes and communities were able to remain in the general vicinity of their former homes or rebuild on the same land. In fact, the lack of permanent

³² Jane Bunting, Claim No. 214. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3743, File 2, 1823.

³³ This number includes claimants who received awards but remained unpaid for unspecified reasons.

³⁴ Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept: Loyalist Refugee Women in Eastern Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 159.

displacement combined with women's increased access to and control over money paid on claims meant that they played a greater role in the rebuilding homes and restoring communities after the war, a topic explored in Module 5.

On Sources

The primary source of evidence for this dissertation is a subset of 167 claims in the records of the Board of Claims for Losses (BCL) submitted by women or administered by widows or female executors of deceased male claimants. Between 1823 and 1826, the BCL met in York, the capitol of Upper Canada, and reviewed 2055 cases for compensation of losses incurred during the War of 1812. I chose this collection of records as a starting point for my research because it contains evidence about many inhabitants who experienced similar situations during the war. In particular, this collection is a unique and excellent source of information about women's lives because claimants submitted documents containing personal statements, lists of possessions, details about their living situations, and supporting statements from neighbors and acquaintances. While women who lived through the early years of settlement in Upper Canada left behind relatively little textual evidence of their experiences, the process of seeking and receiving compensation for their wartime losses created a trove of information.³⁵

The individual claims in the collection are also accompanied by summaries, registers, and indices that facilitate searching and extracting pertinent information. Most importantly, the BCL accepted claims from any British subject living in the province of

³⁵ For more on the Board of Claims for Losses, see Module 4.

Upper Canada during the war, which resulted in increased representation of non-white and non-male inhabitants who submitted claims. Within the 167 claims at the center of this study, however, only three represent the lives of black women and only one was submitted by a native woman. The majority of female claimants to the BCL were white women of Anglo-American descent. Module 4 discusses these claims in detail, including the varying degrees of representation of different communities. Future studies of black and native women that draw on a wider set of sources are necessary to analyze further how racial identity shaped women's experiences during the war.

At the start of this project, I set out to identify and analyze women's experiences that were documented in the records of the BCL. By 2012, the full records of the board (RG19 E5A) had been digitized and made available on the Library and Archives Canada website but were only organized by microfilm reel number, which made searching for specific claims laborious. To more easily identify claims submitted by women, I downloaded each reel, separated them into component parts, and then reassembled the record group in its original volume and file structure as indexed. I located and analyzed various registers within the records, identified 167 claims with female names, extracted the claim documents from their files, and transcribed them for further analysis. The resulting collection of text includes over 60,000 words providing evidence of women's lives, losses, and perspectives during the War of 1812.³⁶

³⁶ For a complete description of this process, see [the section on LAC Materials in the Technical Module](#). The reassembled record group files are available on this dissertation website and in the Library and Archives Canada digital collections.

A second important source of women's experiences is the *Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society* (1817), which includes descriptions of Upper Canadian inhabitants' situations during and after the war. Although the effectiveness of the Loyal and Patriotic Society (LPS) and its board of directors have been debated, their intention as stated in the first meeting in 1812 was to "afford aid and relief to such families of the militia in all parts of the province, as shall appear to experience particular distress" and to "afford like aid and relief to such militia-men as have been, or shall be disabled from labour."³⁷ The report published by the LPS includes details about cases presented to the directors and amounts awarded to relieve suffering. Unlike the BCL, the LPS distributed funds raised from private subscribers to suffering inhabitants in the short term and did not "attempt to compensate losses beyond the mere means of subsistence."³⁸ Even so, there were significant delays in disbursements during the war and relatively few inhabitants received aid prior to 1815. The details contained in the report are often brief but provide insight into the experiences of women who applied for aid or who were represented before the directors.³⁹

Only two scholars have closely examined the war loss claim records and the LPS report to explore how the war affected inhabitants of Upper Canada. Their works, however, are primarily statistical analyses that either ignore or misrepresent women's presence in the records or suffer from flaws in reasoning that undermine their

³⁷ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada* (Montreal: Printed by William Gray, 1817), 11. For an examination of the LPS and how its activities were perceived, see Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 130-131.

³⁸ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society*, 7.

³⁹ For more on the LPS, see the section on [appealing for aid in Module 3: Coping with War](#).

conclusions. George Sheppard's statistical approach in *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles* has generally been accepted as an accurate summation of the war loss claim records.

However, Sheppard uses categories that influence his final tallies, and fails to separate and analyze claims by gender. Most disconcerting is that Sheppard includes in his tables and figures the Gore District, which was created in 1816 from townships previously in the Home and Niagara Districts.⁴⁰ In Sheppard's analysis, Gore accounts for the 310 (15.1%) of claims, the third-highest percentage of claims per district. Although some claimants self-identified as residents of Gore on their claims submitted after 1816, including the district in the final analysis results in altered figures for both Home and Niagara when assessing the impact of war in those districts. While useful for general comparisons, Sheppard's analysis includes this discrepancy—a discrepancy that cannot be resolved without replicating his work entirely, tallying claims by township, and assigning them to contemporary districts.

Whereas Sheppard does not include gender as a category of analysis and makes no observations or arguments about women who submitted claims, a more recent study by Jennifer Legare revisits some of Sheppard's work with the war loss claims records but uses additional categories of analysis to better understand the extent of suffering in Upper Canada.⁴¹ Legare also includes a more thorough analysis of petitions submitted to the LPS, which issued emergency relief funds to sufferers throughout the province. In her thesis, Legare focuses primarily on the Niagara District, arguing that a better historical

⁴⁰ See tables and figures in Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 123-128.

⁴¹ Jennifer Michelle Legare, "From the Ashes: The Niagara District in the War of 1812" (M.A. Thesis, University of Guelph, 2003).

understanding of the most severely affected district will provide a means to explore the war's effects throughout Upper Canada.⁴² Although Legare suggests that experiences in the Niagara District might provide a useful place to begin analysis of the entire province, she concludes—like Sheppard—that the extent of damages was not as extreme as some reports claimed. Her analysis and reasoning, however, demonstrate serious flaws. Legare compares resource statistics for Niagara in 1812 with the war loss claims submitted to the board. For instance, she notes that nearly twelve thousand cattle were present in Niagara in 1812, but only 142 cattle, or 1 per cent, were claimed as lost during the war. From these figures, she argues that “a great proportion of goods available...were not stolen, burned, or plundered.”⁴³ According to Legare, the results of her comparison between resource availability in 1812 and war loss claim contents indicate that the war caused less devastation than previously imagined.

What Legare overlooks, however, is the other factors that might account for the discrepancy between her figures. Principally, we should not assume that the war loss claim records provide an accurate and complete assessment of the losses incurred by the entire province during the war. The requirements of the Board of Claims might have been prohibitive or confusing to some inhabitants who could not afford an agent, clerk, or lawyer to draft their claim. Furthermore, the evidence required to establish and defend a claim might have been difficult to acquire.⁴⁴ Illiterate inhabitants could not have read the

⁴² Legare, “From the Ashes,” 92.

⁴³ Legare, “From the Ashes,” 87.

⁴⁴ In their report, the Board of Commissioners list eight types of claims deemed inadmissible, five classes of admissible claims, and state that they required sworn written or verbal affidavits substantiating the facts in each claim. Joseph Wells et al, *Commissioners' Report, RG19 E5A, Volume 3729, File 8*, 1825, Library and Archives Canada.

newspaper advertisements or pamphlets advertising for submissions and may not have understood how to submit a claim. Inhabitants in more remote areas of the province might have never received newspapers or pamphlets at all. Considering these other complicating factors, the list of resources detailed in the war loss claims cannot be used as a proxy for the full extent of damages caused by the war. Despite the shortcomings of her conclusions, Legare's investigation uncovered important evidence that she leaves relatively unexamined. According to her report on petitions submitted to the LPS, nearly half of all claims were submitted by the Niagara District. More importantly, women submitted about sixty-four per cent of claims from the Niagara District, but only submitted forty-five per cent of all claims.⁴⁵ In every other district, women submitted between 0 and 9.8 per cent of claims to the society. Clearly, the Niagara District is significant, not only for the extent of damages incurred but also for the number of women who submitted claims for aid. If the Niagara District is the place to begin an investigation of wartime losses, then women's experiences in Niagara provide a foundation for understanding the devastation of war.

Because war loss claims and the LPS report provide only partial views of women's experiences, additional sources are necessary to provide context for specific events and to fill in the gaps left in women's lives. For details related to military actions and corroborating first-hand accounts, I have relied on Ernest A. Cruikshank's nine-volume *The Documentary History of the Campaign on the Niagara Frontier*, a compendium of military orders, official correspondence, newspaper excerpts, and

⁴⁵ Legare, "From the Ashes," 99.

personal correspondence.⁴⁶ Like many compilers of military occurrences, Cruikshank relied almost exclusively on men's writing, presents some documents in fragmented form, and included only archival evidence that portrays the war as he perceives most fitting. However, historians of the War of 1812 have long accepted and verified that his collection authentically reproduces the documents within, making it a useful but limited source of militaria.

Many of the women's stories included in the modules that follow are compiled from a variety of sources that contain only incomplete pieces of evidence. Some women who submitted war loss claims are mentioned in Janet Carnochan's *History of Niagara* (1917), whose narrative was informed by archival materials in the Niagara Historical Society & Museum as well as oral histories passed down from mother to daughter from the early 1800s to the end of the century. Other names appear only in the *Records of the Niagara Historical Society* (1896-1939), a 44-volume publication that rarely includes scholarly apparatus such as citations or bibliographies, making it difficult to verify or trace the origins of its fascinating stories. I am indebted to the many amateur genealogists who have graciously posted their findings on a variety of sites, providing an invaluable source of information about families who do not appear in printed sources or archival collections. In particular, R. Robert Mutrie has provided historians an excellent resource by transcribing thousands of land petitions, deeds, census records, township papers, and maps from the Niagara District.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Documentary History of the Campaign on the Niagara Frontier*, 9 vols. (Niagara Falls: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1896).

⁴⁷ R. Robert Mutrie, The Niagara Settlers, May 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers/>.

Using the war loss records and the LPS report as starting point, I have attempted to find as much information as possible for each women whose shared experience contributes to our understanding of the War of 1812 in Niagara and Upper Canada more broadly. In some cases, I was able to reconstruct a surprising amount of women's lives before, during, and after the war by cross-referencing these disparate sources. In other cases, more work is needed to delve more deeply, search more widely, or perhaps wait patiently until a photograph of a forgotten headstone provides a next steppingstone.

Hybrid Dissertation Model

From the outset of this project, the final form of presentation has been envisioned as a combination of traditional history text displayed alongside interactive digital components in a unified website that allows readers and users to move between narratives, source materials, data, analyses, and conclusions according to their own interests. The two primary components of this dissertation—a text and a suite of interactive technologies—can be read and explored separately but also complement one another to form a more holistic perspective on sources, figures, and analyses. This approach meets the George Mason University (GMU) Department of History definition of a dissertation, which is “a piece of original scholarly writing that demonstrates a Ph.D. candidate's mastery of subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in the chosen field of study.”⁴⁸ It also conforms to the department policy on hybrid dissertations

⁴⁸ “PhD Program in History Rules and Guidelines,” George Mason University - History and Art History, November 2020, <https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/graduate/phd-history>.

in which a student may produce “companion digital products to support and supplement their written dissertation.”⁴⁹

The textual component consists of four parts: 1) an introduction; 2) five content modules that are similar to chapters in a traditional dissertation; 3) an epilogue; and 4) a technical module reflecting on the process and technologies used to produce the project. The text will be deposited in the Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS) in PDF form and will serve as the dissertation of record according to their guidelines. Readers will be able to download the PDF and read the entire text in a linear form not unlike a traditional dissertation or book. Additionally, these parts will also be presented in digital format on website pages, which will feature greater integration with the interactive components of the project. For example, where the PDF document includes a single image, the digital text will include a gallery of images with accompanying details and annotations that allow readers to better understand the scope of the material.

The digital components of the project are supplemental to the main text of the dissertation but allow users to more fully explore and interact with source materials, data, and analytical observations. The project website will use Omeka Classic as the main interface and will include three primary elements: 1) a collection of linked source materials, images, and illustrations; 2) an interactive network graph; and 3) two interactive maps. The collection of materials will allow users to explore the available sources related to specific families and places identified in the project. The interactive

⁴⁹ “Digital Dissertation Guidelines,” George Mason University - History and Art History, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/graduate/phd-history/digital-dissertation-guidelines>.

network component will provide a graphical representation of community connections present in documentation submitted to the Board of Claims for Losses but will also allow users to view more about each individual included in the network. The interactive map will present the locations of the homes, farms, and towns identified in the project as well as relevant military actions to provide a dynamic representation of spatial and temporal context in which women's experiences in the Niagara District occurred. It will also allow users to view more information about any item included on the map through links to the collection of source materials.

In designing this hybrid dissertation model, I owe much thanks to Dr. Sharon Leon, who first drafted the digital dissertation guidelines for the history department, and Drs. Celeste Sharpe and Jeri Wieringa, who produced the first two digital history dissertations at GMU. They explored how newly created policies for digital dissertations interacted with existing guidelines for dissertation formats and depositing procedures. Each of their projects used platforms and approaches very different from those found in this project yet their work proved that history dissertations can incorporate cutting-edge technologies while remaining true to the spirit and goals of doctoral history scholarship. They paved the way for the work presented here, which I hope provides yet another model upon which future scholars may reflect and build in their own unique way.

The women in this study were made visible in part because they lived through devastating moments during a particularly destructive war. But a deeper and broader view of their lives shows that those events—while important—were only small parts of

much larger stories. Military histories that focus solely on dramatic scenes of suffering and loss obscure other experiences and actions of women that provide much deeper insights into the ways that the war shaped life in Upper Canada. Conversely, social histories of the province describe women's participation in households, economics, and society with no reference to the life-changing events that took place between 1812 and 1815. The stories, evidence, analysis, and conclusions presented in the modules that follow are situated between these two types of histories. Women's actions during traumatic moments of loss and displacement serve as an important point of departure from which the rest of their lives can be examined. How well women coped with and responded to deaths of family members, loss of personal and commercial goods, and destruction of their homes determined whether their families and communities could survive a brutal war on the frontier. Yet those actions were not separate from the work they had been doing before the war to ensure the daily survival of their families nor the more difficult task of rebuilding their lives in the postwar decades. The challenges that women faced and overcame during the War of 1812 were part of a continuum of experiences and actions that had roots in the American Revolution and grew to shape Upper Canada in the nineteenth century and beyond.

MODULE 1: “AN OBJECT OF PERSISTENT AND HEROIC EFFORT”⁵⁰

Sometime before 1806, Elizabeth Clarke Campbell arrived in Newark, a growing town on the western bank where the Niagara River empties into Lake Ontario. She was accompanying her new husband, Donald Campbell, who was fulfilling his appointment as fort-major at nearby Fort George. Elizabeth was the daughter of Irish immigrants who had settled in Halifax. Donald was a Loyalist from North Carolina who had been imprisoned at one point during the Revolution for “corresponding with the enemy.”⁵¹ He later joined the Royal North Carolina Regiment and was captured at Yorktown when Cornwallis surrendered. Imprisoned, paroled, and then shipped out from Florida, he arrived in Nova Scotia in 1784. Although Campbell received 550 acres in Country Harbour, Nova Scotia, he was apparently more interested in pursuing his military career, serving as an officer in the Nova Scotia Regiment, the Royal Fusiliers, and the 5th Foot before his appointment to Fort George in Upper Canada.⁵² During his time in the service in Nova Scotia, Campbell joined the social circle that included the Clarke family and married Elizabeth in 1805, shortly before they departed the maritime province for the western edge of British North America.

The Campbells’ relocation to Newark was part of the rapid settlement and military construction in the Niagara District that began in 1780. Between 1806 and 1812,

⁵⁰ From Edward Bernard Hein’s description of conquest in the Niagara Frontier in “Niagara Frontier and the War of 1812” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 1949), 1.

⁵¹ Robert O. DeMond, *The Loyalists in North Carolina During the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 82.

⁵² W. D. Ardagh and Robert A. Harrison, eds., “Judge Campbell,” in *The Upper Canada Law Journal and Municipal and Local Courts’ Gazette*, vol. 6 (Toronto: Maclear & Co., 1860), 3–4.

Elizabeth gave birth to four children: Edward Clark, John Angus, Sarah Eleanor, and an infant whose name has been lost. The family lived in “A neat frame house, well finished and painted consisting of six Rooms, with Stable & other outhouses.”⁵³ They kept cows and horses in a farmyard surrounded by a split-rail fence.⁵⁴ Their home was thirty-two by thirty-eight feet and had one and one-half stories, which was typical of more spacious houses in Newark. Heated by cast-iron stoves and comfortably furnished for daily life and entertaining, their home became known in the town as a “seat of hospitality and plenty.”⁵⁵ Brought to the district by the expansion of the military in Upper Canada, the Campbells built a life for themselves in the growing town and enhanced its social and economic growth. Yet when war between Britain and the United States of America was declared in 1812, the Campbells and everyone they knew faced violence, looting, destruction, and displacement that threatened to erase thirty years of toil and growth.⁵⁶

The story of the Campbell family that opens each of the modules in this study begins with common elements of early settlers in the new province: a first-generation Nova Scotian married a Loyalist refugee from North Carolina, moved to the frontier of

⁵³ Edward Campbell, Claim No. 175. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Campbell, Claim No. 174. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

⁵⁵ Alexander Wood to William Campbell, January 13, 1816, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/60E81C89-043E-468C-9F82-693996138828>. Compared with other house sizes listed in claims, the Campbells' house was in the top 13 per cent in square footage. Edward Campbell, Claim No. 175. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823; Peter Babcock and David Hemmings, “War Claims Index, by Surname” (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society & Museum, 2011), <http://swroberts.ca/far/items/show/811>.

⁵⁶ While it is possible that Donald Campbell was also motivated by the potential for free land in Niagara, surviving records do not indicate whether their house was built on land he received from the Crown. His apparent abandonment of his land in Nova Scotia further suggests that he was pursuing his career as a military administrator rather than a landowner.

Upper Canada, started a family, built an estate, helped establish a thriving community, suffered tremendous losses during a brutal war, and then rebuilt everything in the postwar era. While the family is not meant to represent every inhabitant, their journey helps mark out the path that many others also followed and provides a point of comparison for experiences that differed. Most importantly, the fact that the Campbell family and most early inhabitants like them settled in the Niagara District has defined the geographical focus of this study.

This module argues that the Niagara District provides the most suitable case study of how women coped with and responded to the War of 1812 in Upper Canada for three reasons. First, the Niagara District was at the center of the most intense action of the war and was a long-contested space in which different groups and nations have fought for control of the Niagara River and the resources to which it provides access. By the outbreak of the War of 1812, the district had become a valuable strategic goal that would allow the United States to control access to the Great Lakes and fur trade routes, cut off British support for western native allies, and establish a foothold in Upper Canada from which to force Britain out of North America. Because the Niagara District became the main focal point in the northern theater, its inhabitants experienced destruction and displacement more severely than residents in any other district. Between 1812 and 1815, they were subjected to three invasions, seven major battles, dozens of minor skirmishes, long periods of enemy occupation, substantial appropriations by the British military, plundering by friendly and enemy soldiers, and destructive moments in which whole villages and towns were burned to the ground. The long and brutal war in Niagara meant

that more local men were wounded or died while serving in the militia, more women became heads of households when men died or were imprisoned, more inhabitants had private property taken or destroyed, and entire communities were displaced when their homes were burned. An analysis of the effect of the War of 1812 on women in Upper Canada and their responses to those experiences must focus on Niagara because the district with the greatest population was also a valuable target of conquest, creating a situation in which intense, brutal warfare affected thousands of inhabitants.

Second, the early settlement and rapid population growth in the Niagara District between 1780 and 1812 created a large, diverse population concentrated in a relatively small geographic region that created a significant source of evidence related to experiences and actions during the war. Records related to the settlement of Niagara date back to the first attempts at permanent British habitation of the western bank of the Niagara River in the 1780s. Although settlers spread westward into the rest of the province, no other region developed as quickly as Niagara, which quickly overtook more established settlements in the east like Kingston and Cornwall. By 1806, the district was the most populated British settlement in Upper Canada with over 11,000 inhabitants (24 percent of the provincial population).⁵⁷ A higher population in general also meant a higher population of women. In an 1806 census of the Home District, female adults represented about 20 percent of the population.⁵⁸ Assuming that ratio was similar in

⁵⁷ Douglas McCalla, "Appendix B, Table 2.1: Population of Upper Canada, by District, 1805-6," in *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 250.

⁵⁸ George Sheppard, "'Wants and Privations': Women and the War of 1812 in Upper Canada," *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 28, no. 55 (1995), 162n7.

Niagara, approximately 2,200 adult women lived in the district in the decade before the war. While the Niagara District covered about 4,000 square kilometers (~1,500 sq. miles), most of the district's inhabitants were concentrated in towns along the shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario, the banks of the Niagara and Chippewa Rivers, or in farming communities scattered across the region. With a large population living in both rural areas and town centers, the Niagara District provides diverse representations of life in Upper Canada in the early nineteenth century.

Finally, because Niagara was both highly populated and suffered the greatest losses during the war, its inhabitants' lives have greater representation in official and public records than residents of other districts. Throughout the settlement of Lower and Upper Canada, Loyalists seeking refuge from persecution petitioned the British government for land to replace what they had lost in support of the Crown. Men and women submitted written petitions and supporting evidence to prove their identity, loyalty, and character, often "detailing services, losses and suffering during the American Revolutionary War."⁵⁹ The flood of refugees and immigrants into the Niagara District resulted in thousands of documents related to their lives and the settlement of the district being preserved in the records of the Upper Canada Land Petitions. After thirty-two years of growth and stability, Niagara was suddenly disrupted by war and its inhabitants were subjected to injuries, losses, and displacements that were sometimes documented in military reports, correspondence, and ledgers that always accompany war operations.

⁵⁹ Library and Archives Canada, "Land Petitions of Upper Canada, 1763-1865," March 22, 2013, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-upper-canada-1763-1865/Pages/land-petitions-upper-canada.aspx>.

More significantly, relief organizations and official boards of investigation collected and preserved details about inhabitants' suffering and losses. The Loyal and Patriotic Society solicited funds to distribute as relief for suffering inhabitants and provided information about over 800 people—nearly half from Niagara—who received support in a report published in 1817. Similarly, the records of the Board of Claims for Losses (BCL) include information about the lives of over 670 inhabitants of Niagara, which account for 33 percent of all claims made to the board. All these sources make the greater population of Niagara more visible in the historic record, allowing deeper inquiries about how the war affected inhabitants' lives and how their responses to traumatic events shaped the district and province in the postwar era.

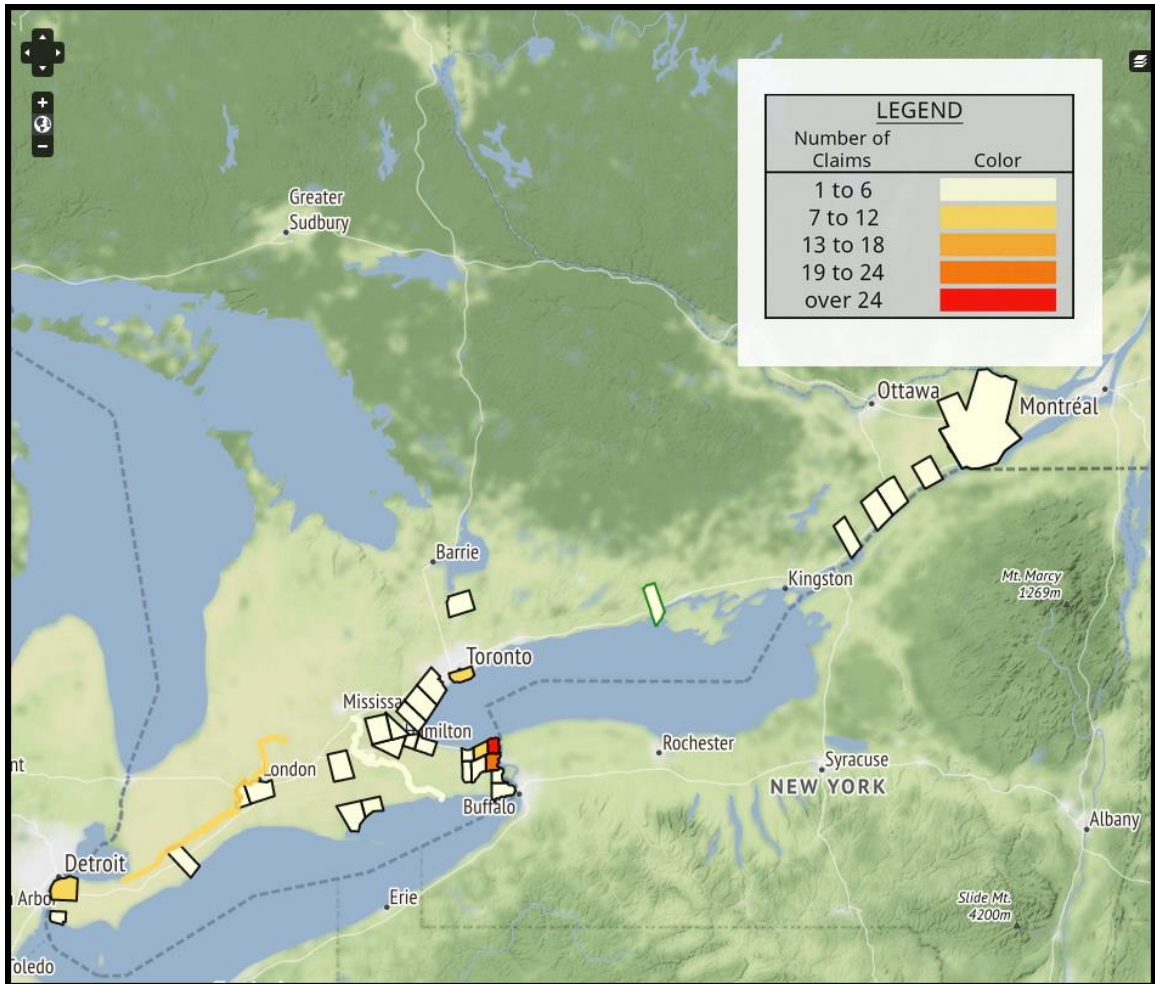


Figure 2 Distribution of Women's Loss Claims in Upper Canada [screenshot]

This map shows the distribution of women who either submitted or inherited claims made to the BCL. Claims are represented by township across the province of Upper Canada. The townships with the highest proportion of women's claims are Niagara and Stamford in the Niagara District, which experienced the most intense fighting in the province. Other townships in which the war caused significant losses include York in the Home District and Sandwich in the Western District. Claimants living along the River Thames often provided no further details about their residence, so those claims are

represented by the path of the river itself. The [interactive map on the project website](#) includes the specific figures for each township along with links to more information about each female claimant.⁶⁰

Rapid Development in Niagara

At the beginning of the war, both Britain and the United States recognized the importance of the Niagara District as a cornerstone of the entire province that provided security for state and commercial interests throughout the Great Lakes. In the early weeks of the war, Secretary of State William Eustis wrote to a general officer, “Not a moment should be lost in gaining possession of Niagara and Kingston,” hoping that swift action would give the Americans control of the entirety of Upper Canada.⁶¹ Although his hope of a quick attack and capture of Niagara did not come to fruition, Eustis was another in the succession of strategists who recognized the importance of Niagara. The settlement of Niagara was marked by a series of attempts to gain and maintain control over the river and surrounding lands, turning the region from a forested wilderness dotted with native camps and villages into the most populated and valuable district in the province.

From the first arrival of European explorers in the region, men with military and commercial aspirations recognized the value of controlling the Niagara River, the gateway from Lake Ontario into the upper Great Lakes and the interior of the continent. The earliest French explorers and Jesuit priests were impressed with the power of the falls at Niagara, “a vast and prodigious Cadence of Water,” where the upper river plunges

⁶⁰ For more information about how this map was generated, see the [section on Maps in the Technical Module](#).

⁶¹ Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3:181. Eustis likely refers to Niagara the town, also called Newark, which was next to Fort George and was the linchpin in the defenses of the Niagara District.

over fifty meters onto the rocks below.⁶² Although they initially viewed the falls as both a natural wonder and obstacle to their progress up the waterway, the French also quickly recognized the river's importance in the fur trade. In 1679 and 1687, they attempted to build blockhouses on the lower river to house both men and supplies essential to their exploration and trading, but both projects were lost due to accidental fires and conflict with local native tribes. Finally, in 1725, the French were able to negotiate permission to build a stone fort at the mouth of the Niagara River on Lake Ontario, a structure which became a focal point in territorial disputes for nearly one hundred years.⁶³

As the first permanent settlement for Europeans along the river, Fort Niagara was the seed from which the entire region's success bloomed. In 1770, John Huddleston Wynne wrote that Fort Niagara was "the most important post in America and secures a greater number of communications, through a more extensive country, than perhaps any other pass in the world⁶⁴." It seems unlikely that Wynne conducted a thorough comparison with all other forts throughout the world, but he was correct to acknowledge the importance of the fort in determining the success of Europeans' endeavors in the Great Lakes region. When the British captured the fort in 1759 from the French, they effectively monopolized the trade route from the interior to the coast by controlling the easiest and most efficient passage. The Niagara River and the portage around the falls

⁶² Louis Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 1 (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 54. Though Hennepin's reliability has often been questioned, his description captures the amazement of early European explorers in the region.

⁶³ See Peter A. Porter, *A Brief History of Old Fort Niagara* (Buffalo: The Matthews Northrup Co., 1896), 15-24, for a history of the various structures built, destroyed, and then rebuilt along the river.

⁶⁴ John Huddleston Wynne, *A General History of the British Empire in America*, vol. 2 (London: W. Richardson and L. Urquhart, 1770), 102n.

was the best way to move goods between Upper and Lower Canada, so the empire in possession of Fort Niagara could dictate the terms of trade.

Despite its importance for merchants and the military, Fort Niagara had little impact on the land surrounding it until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, which became an important catalyst in the expansion of settlement in the Niagara District. During the war, Loyalist refugees began to flood into the region seeking new places to settle down and hoping for support from the British government, putting an additional strain on the fort's resources. Due to the cold winters that froze many of the waterways and the difficulty of overland transport, provisioning a frontier outpost in Upper Canada with supplies from Lower Canada was a constant challenge. For most of its existence, Fort Niagara had been reliant on regular supplies from outside sources and had limited capacity to provide for the troops, native allies, or refugees that it housed and protected. Although the garrison had constructed barracks across the river to house Colonel John Butler's Rangers in 1778, the British had largely discouraged substantial settlement of Upper Canada in order to preserve their relations with native tribes who lived and hunted throughout the region.⁶⁵ In 1779, General Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Quebec, changed that policy by suggesting to his superiors, "By encouraging the settlement of farmers to raise grain and cattle in the vicinity, the security of these posts would be increased and the troops better supplied."⁶⁶ Lacking firsthand knowledge of the land, Haldimand passed his idea to Lieutenant-Colonel Mason Bolton, commander of the

⁶⁵ Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), 2-3.

⁶⁶ E. A. Cruikshank, "Ten Years of the Colony of Niagara, 1780 to 1790," in *Records of Niagara Historical Society*, vol. 17, 25 vols. (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1908), 3.

garrison at Fort Niagara, who undertook a feasibility assessment of the proposal. In a decision that would shape the future of the entire region, Bolton and his advisors decided that the west shore was more suitable than the east “both from the soil and the situation.”⁶⁷ Pressured by the influx of Loyalists and the increasing demand for support, the decision to begin settling the western shore of the Niagara River initiated a period of rapid growth in the young province.

Over the next ten years, the primary force behind the settlement on the western shore of the Niagara River was substantial investment by governors and military commanders through provision of land and equipment that supported the growth of farms. By December 1780, Colonel Butler had initiated the settlement plan and reported that he had “four or five families settled and they have built themselves houses.”⁶⁸ The government provided both land and farming implements free of charge to those who settled and produced crops to supply the outpost. The statistics collected by Butler prove the success of the farming initiative and the rapid growth of the settlement. Between December 1780 and August 1782, a total of 238 acres of forested land were cleared to make fields. At that time, there were sixteen families in the settlement containing eighty-four inhabitants: sixteen married men, seventeen married women, one young or hired man, twenty-nine boys, twenty girls, and one enslaved man. By 1783, over 700 acres had been cleared, over 100 acres were planted, and over 300 were ready for planting. The population had swelled to forty-six families comprising about 600 inhabitants.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁷ Cruikshank, “Ten Years of the Colony of Niagara, 1780 to 1790,” 4.

⁶⁸ Cruikshank, “Ten Years of the Colony of Niagara, 1780 to 1790,” 4.

⁶⁹ Janet Carnochan, *History of Niagara* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1914), 7; Cruikshank, “Ten Years of the Colony of Niagara, 1780 to 1790,” 8. The discrepancy between the number of married men and women in

combination of government support and the suitability of the Niagara District for farming meant that many families were able to become self-sustaining and the region began to attract even more settlers.

Another major government initiative that stimulated settlement and economic growth in the Niagara District was the construction of publicly subsidized lumber and grist mills. The dramatic drop in elevation at the escarpment created many streams and creeks that could power water mills, which were built across the region to cut timber and grind grain. In 1791, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, expressed his desire to “furnish the necessary materials for some Grist & Saw Mills” which would be necessary for the “speedy Settlement of Lands” and “erection of publick [sic] Buildings.”⁷⁰ While many mills were built with government funds, other mills were constructed by individuals with only private investment. In 1789, entrepreneur John Green built his own grist mill on Forty Mile Creek (near present-day Grimsby) in Niagara and told one visitor that he intended “to bring up all his sons to farming, and to build for each of them a mill, either on this or on a neighboring creek.”⁷¹ Like other mills throughout the region and province, Green’s mills provided a family legacy and were a connection point between farmers, local merchants, military outposts, and more distant commercial markets.

1782 results from the household of John Secord, which included two married women. This may represent a mother or mother-in-law who was listed as married but was in fact widowed, or a married daughter whose husband was absent.

⁷⁰ John Graves Simcoe, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor Sir John Graves Simcoe*, ed. E. A. Cruikshank (Toronto: Toronto Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 20.

⁷¹ François-Alexandre-Frédéric duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America: The Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 4 vols. (London: R. Phillips; Printed by T. Gillet, 1800), 463.

Following the successful establishment of farmland and mills throughout the Niagara District, the development that most securely guaranteed the growth and prosperity of the region was trade and commerce. While farms and mills provided food for government stores and personal use and lumber for various projects, the Niagara River was quickly recognized by merchants as an opportunity to secure their place as a central hub in the network of trade emerging in the new province. In 1802, John Clark, a respectable young man from a military family, took an apprenticeship with George Forsyth, a prosperous merchant, “to learn the art and mystery of commerce,”⁷² because “all the young men in stores were crazy to become merchants.”⁷³ After a few years, Clark was able to obtain letters of credit and travel to Montreal, where he was “successfully furnished with goods to open a store.”⁷⁴ He returned to Niagara and opened his store, but was disenchanted by what he called “housekeeping” and lamented that he was only able to leave that role through “considerable sacrifice.”⁷⁵ Clark’s example demonstrates the extent to which young men were enamored by the opportunities offered by commercial activity in Niagara, even at the expense of their own happiness.

The growth of commercial activity in Niagara is also evident through a comparison of planning maps drawn in 1797 and 1798 of different points along the Niagara River. A map of Fort Erie on Lake Ontario shows twelve planned lots, with some reserved for Robert Hamilton, Thomas Clarke, Henry Warren, Robert Nichols, and

⁷² John Clark, “Memoirs of Colonel John Clark, of Port Dalhousie, C.W.,” in *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, vol. 7 (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1906), 169.

⁷³ Clark, “Memoirs of Colonel John Clark,” 169.

⁷⁴ Clark, “Memoirs of Colonel John Clark,” 169.

⁷⁵ Clark, “Memoirs of Colonel John Clark,” 169.

Thomas Dickson. Fort Erie was an important point of divergence for trade goods traveling upriver, which could head further west by lake or east and south into New York.

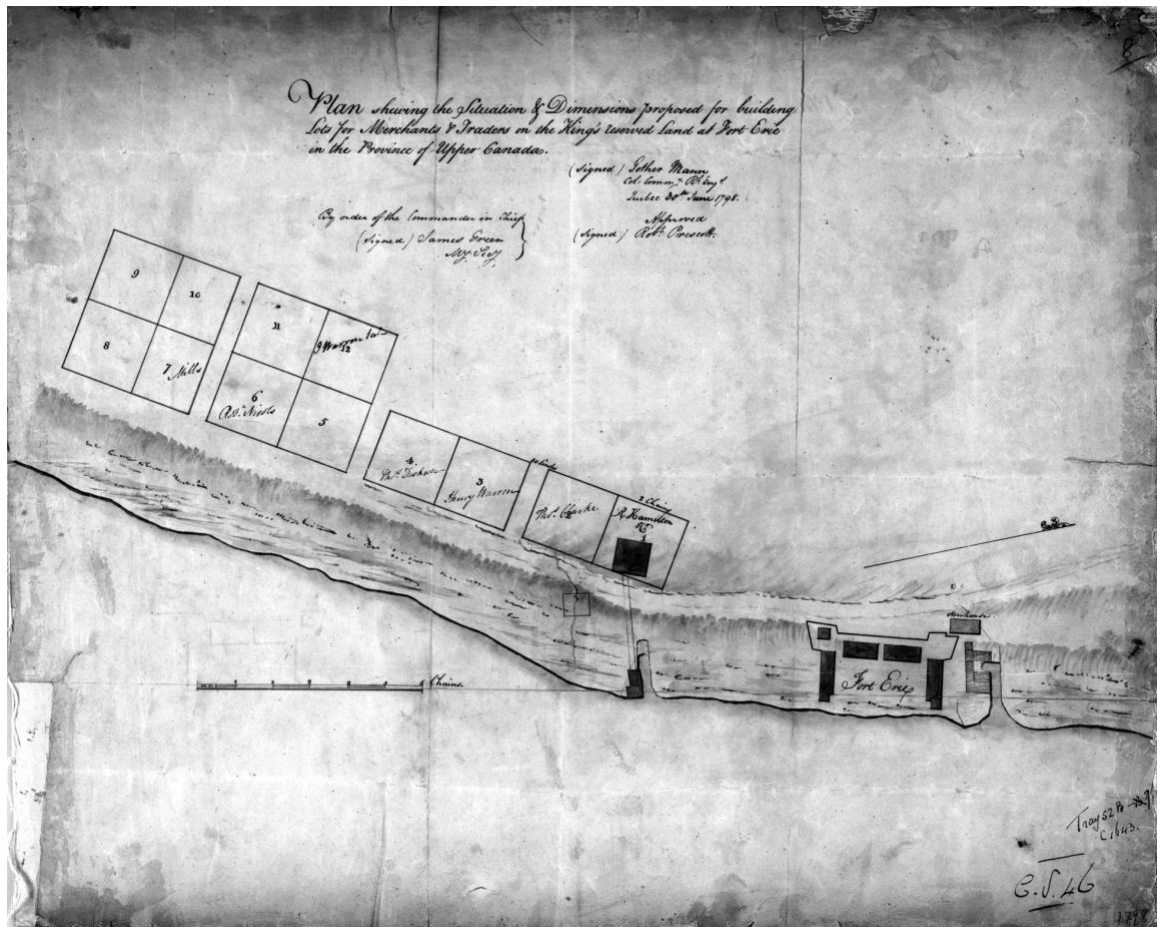


Figure 3 Plan shewing the Situation & Dimensions proposed for building Lots for Merchants & Traders on the King's reserved Land at Fort Erie in the Province of Upper Canada, Gother Mann and James Green, 1798. Map, Data and GIS Library, Brock University.

Two maps of the area where the Chippewa River flows into the Niagara River show at least six planned lots for merchants with labels on lots reserved for Hamilton, Clarke, and Dickson, as well as Samuel Street. Chippewa was the head of the portage route around the falls, where boats arriving from Lake Erie would unload their cargo into

wagons for the journey down the escarpment. Having warehouses at Chippewa was important to ensure that goods heading up and down river could be stored before or after the portage. These maps also show the portage road alongside the Niagara River and bridges crossing smaller rivers, demonstrating the infrastructure built to support commercial activities and troop movements along the border.

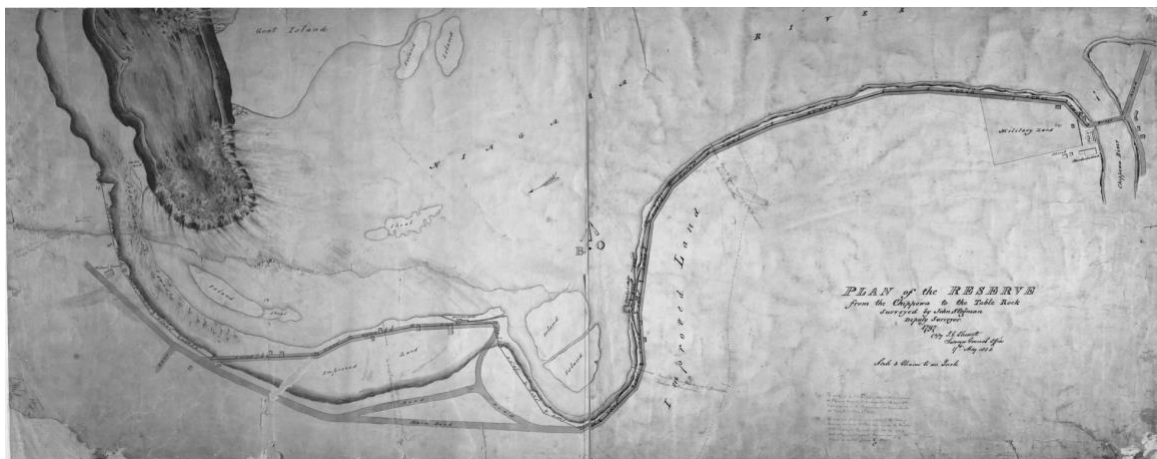


Figure 4 *Plan of the Reserve from the Chippewa to the Table Rock*, John Stegman, 1797. Map, Data and GIS Library, Brock University.

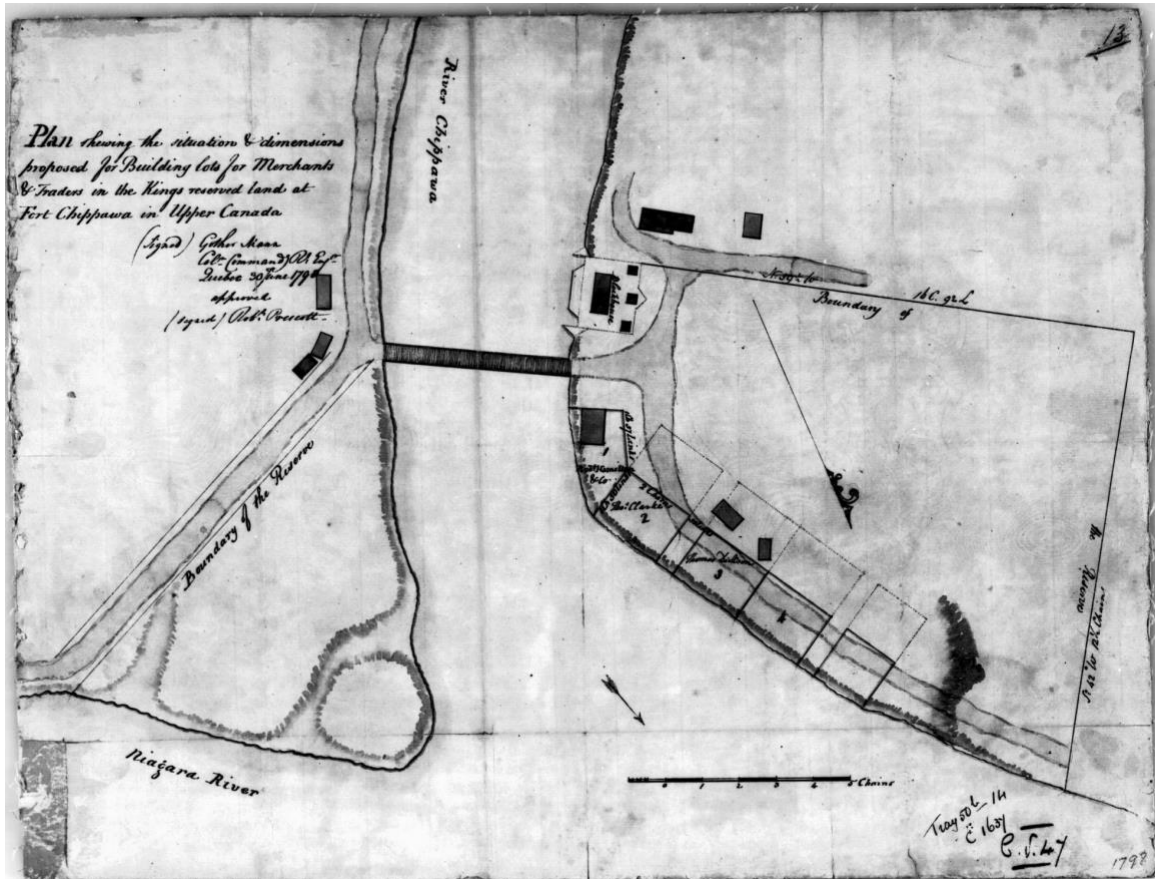


Figure 5 Plan shewing the situation & dimensions proposed for Building lots for Merchants & Traders in the Kings reserved land at Fort Chippawa in Upper Canada, Gother Mann, 1798. Map, Data and GIS Library, Brock University.

At the base of the falls in Queenston, the portaged goods were loaded back onto boats to travel through Lake Ontario up into Lower Canada. A map of Queenston includes a planned lot for the collector of customs and lots for Hamilton, Clarke, and Dickson. It also shows the roads leading to Newark and the portage road leading away from the river.



Figure 6 Plan shewing the situation & dimensions proposed for building lots for merchants & traders on the Kings reserved land near the west landing on the Niagara River in the Province of Upper Canada, Gother Mann, 1798. Map, Data and GIS Library, Brock University.

On the northern end of the river where it meets Lake Ontario, planners sketched out eighteen lots along the river and lake front in Newark, including reserved lots for Andrew Heron, James Crooks, and George Forsyth. The 1802 map also includes the site of Fort George and the buildings and wharfs at Navy Hall, used by both British military ships and commercial vessels carrying goods westward. Each of the men named on the lots along the river were successful merchants and traders with partners and connections in places along the commercial corridors such as Detroit, Kingston, Montreal, Albany,

and New York. As the fur trade continued to grow and the flow of goods into the western territories increased, Niagara's position as a central hub contributed to the successful expansion of the settlements through the district.

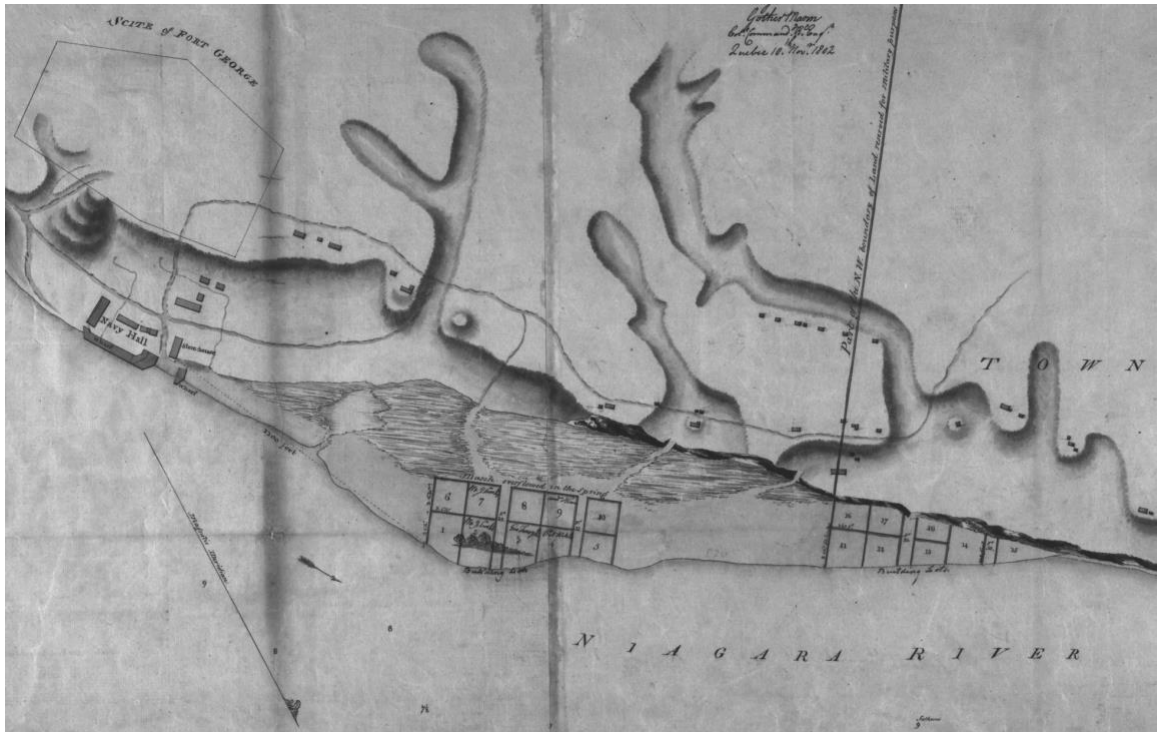


Figure 7 Plan Showing the Situation & Dimensions Proposed for Building Lots for Merchants and Traders on the King's Reserved Land Near Fort George in the Province of Upper Canada [cropped], Gother Mann, 1802

From its origin as a farming community to support Fort Niagara on the American side of the river, the Niagara District rapidly became the most active trading hub in Upper Canada with the fastest growing population in the province. The success of the farming initiative promoted by British officials provided a base on which further industries could be built. The river's importance in the fur trade was further expanded and the region

became an ideal place for merchants to set up and exploit their position at a narrow point in the transportation network. Both of these factors were important in making Niagara a valuable target when American officers began formulating their war plans. However, the proximity of the Niagara District to the western boundary of New York State, while adding to the appeal of capturing Niagara, created complex relationships across the border that would influence both the events of the war and its legacy in the region.

Cross-border Competition and Cooperation

Since even before Europeans encountered the Niagara River and the falls that interrupt its flow between the lakes, the region has been a point of overlapping and interwoven alliances and conflicts. In his history of Fort Niagara, Peter A. Porter claims that the land along the river was “owned and occupied” by a native group known by the French as the Neutrals, and suggests that they derived their name from the fact that while they were “often at war with other tribes, they never warred with either the Iroquois [Haudenosaunee] or Hurons, between whom they were located.”⁷⁶ Porter may or may not have accurately traced the origin of the name, but the group of native people living in that region was indeed a member of the Iroquoian linguistic family referred to as the Neutrals. In *Annals of Niagara*, Kirby also writes about the Neutrals, remarking that they “were a numerous and warlike race, at war with everyone except the Hurons and Iroquois.”⁷⁷ With eleven distinct groups spread from northern Ontario through upstate New York and

⁷⁶ Porter, *A Brief History of Old Fort Niagara*, 10-11.

⁷⁷ William Kirby, *Annals of Niagara* (Welland: Tribune, 1896), 8. Both Kirby and Porter refer to the “Iroquois” as a distinct tribe, but they are likely referring to the Haudenosaunee.

even into parts of Pennsylvania, the Iroquoian linguistic family shared language characteristics but that similarity did not prevent occasional conflicts between them.

The Niagara River region was at the center of areas populated by at least four different groups in potential competition for resources: Neutral, Wenro, Erie, and Seneca. In Upper Canada, Huron and Petun groups claimed land to the north. In New York, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk groups, all part of the Haudenosaunee, controlled lands to the east.⁷⁸ Despite being centrally located, the Neutrals did not choose sides in the war between the Hurons in the north and the Haudenosaunee in the east. Eventually, the Haudenosaunee overwhelmed the Hurons before turning south to destroy and disperse the Neutrals⁷⁹, whose name for their communities along the great river between Lakes Erie and Ontario, Onguiaahra, would become well-known throughout the province in its Gallicized form, Niagara. The story of the Neutrals and their relationship with other Iroquoian groups suggests a theme that is evident throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Niagara: groups with shared language, experiences, and desires sometimes working together and sometimes going to war to acquire access and control of resources.

Early European settlement in Niagara was similarly marked by contest and cooperation between different nations, but the terms of negotiation and engagement were recorded in official, bureaucratic formats such as claims, deeds, acts, and declarations of war. Porter identifies seven discrete periods of ownership and occupation of Fort Niagara

⁷⁸ W. G. Dean, Geoffrey J. Matthews, and Byron Moldofsky, eds., *Concise Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 31.

⁷⁹ Kirby, *Annals of Niagara*, 8.

from 1651 to 1896, in which the status of the fort and surrounding area was claimed, challenged, or defended by native tribes, the French, the British, and the Americans.⁸⁰ Following the end of the French and Indian War, in which the British had captured Fort Niagara, Britain claimed possession of all former French territory in North America. The fort and the land surrounding it, however, had never been formally ceded to the French and remained in the possession of the Seneca. In 1764, with a large force of British soldiers and allied native warriors at his disposal and wielding threats about trade prohibitions, Sir William Johnson negotiated a treaty with the Seneca to gain possession of the Niagara River from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie. In addition to formalizing a peace between the Seneca and the British, the treaty described a tract of land about 4 miles inland from the river on the east and western shores. More importantly, it also stipulated that the Seneca would not “obstruct the Passage of Carrying Place, or the free Use of any part of the said Tract,” which was of utmost importance to the protection of trade that Britain sought to control.⁸¹ Having won occupation of the fort and land from the French and having purchased ownership from the Seneca, the British were able to manage the flow of goods through the Niagara region and contemplate settlement in the new territory. Through the end of the Revolutionary War, Fort Niagara remained a frontier outpost with the primary purpose of protecting British merchants and native allies involved in the fur trade in the Great Lakes.

⁸⁰ Porter, *A Brief History of Old Fort Niagara*, 13.

⁸¹ The initial agreement with the Seneca allowed for a two-mile tract along each bank of the river, but was later amended to include a much larger area. See “Copy of a Seneca Indian Treaty with the British, 1764,” 1764, Barclay Collection, Box 1, Maine Memory Network, <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/8955>; Karl Hele, “Treaty of Niagara, 1764,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, January 11, 2021), <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-of-niagara-1764>.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, trade in and through the Niagara region became another point of contest and cooperation for British and Americans alike. The easiest way to navigate Upper Canada was by boat or canoe, but portage routes were needed to move people and goods from Lake Erie around the falls to access Lake Ontario. Furs and other goods traveling east and supplies traveling west were all funneled toward a single point, which captured the attention of logistically minded military officers and enterprising merchants. During the years of French military presence, the portage route around Niagara Falls was on the eastern side of the river, which may have benefited from the presence of native inhabitants looking for work as porters.⁸² When the British took control of the fort, they also took over the work of the portage, “monopolizing that business, and employing carts,” rather than native people to carry the goods.⁸³ Following the forfeit of Fort Niagara and the lands east of the river to the United States in 1794, the British quickly sought to create their own portage route around the falls on their side and so retain control of the trade route. By 1790, a road had been built along the western shore of the river to facilitate trade to and from the western regions of Quebec. Merchants such as Robert Hamilton and George Forsythe helped plan and implement the road in order to benefit from the increase in merchandise being shipped through the area and sold in markets both local and distant.⁸⁴ David W. Smyth, Surveyor-General of Upper Canada, wrote about the transport of goods through the region: “When the wind serves, vessels run up from Newark to Queenstown, and unload their cargoes,

⁸² Kirby, *Annals of Niagara*, 47.

⁸³ Porter, *A Brief History of Old Fort Niagara*, 45.

⁸⁴ Cruikshank, “Ten Years of the Colony of Niagara, 1780 to 1790,” 39.

receiving packs of peltries in return, for the Lower Canada merchants. Fifty waggons have passed this carrying place in the course of a day.”⁸⁵ Smyth’s account is similar to one provided by a traveler printed in Philadelphia in 1796, in which the author describes seeing at Queenston “four vessels of sixty and one hundred tons burthen, unloading at the same time, and sometimes not less than sixty waggons loaded in a day” taking goods up the portage road to Chippewa.⁸⁶ These accounts both demonstrate the increasing traffic of goods through the region and the benefits to merchants, transporters, and the government controlling the route, customs houses, and portage roads in Niagara.

The opportunities created by the growth of settlements in Niagara and the accompanying increase in trade were also beneficial to American merchants who could forge the necessary partnerships spanning the border. The need for collaboration between British and American merchants, though risky in a time of political conflict, is evident in a letter from Peter Walton and Son in Albany, New York, to James Cummings and Co., in Chippewa, Upper Canada. Written in 1812, the letter includes the news that many people believed the United States Congress would soon declare war on Britain and that such a development “will operate very much against as all.”⁸⁷ Cummings was one of the merchants operating on the river alongside well-established operators such as Hamilton, Dickson, and Street. His connection with partners across the border, as well as their

⁸⁵ David William Smyth, *A Short Topographical Description of His Majesty’s Province of Upper Canada in North America: To Which Is Annexed a Provincial Gazetteer* (London: W. Faden, geographer to His Majesty, 1799), 31.

⁸⁶ “From a Journey into the Western Territory, in ’94.,” *Gazette of the United States, and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser*, July 22, 1796, <https://lccn.loc.gov/sn83025881>.

⁸⁷ Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3:67.

shared concern about the disruption to trade, was common among merchants whose loyalties did not prevent them from seeking the best avenue for profit.

As the conflict between the two nations intensified in 1811 and 1812, men whose livelihoods relied on the uninterrupted flow of furs from the west and goods from the east made preparations and alerted their partners to changes in status. On June 20, 1812, John Jacob Astor, a young merchant already experiencing success in the fur trade that would later make him famous, sent letters to British merchant contacts, warning them of the declaration of war and potential impact on commercial activities. One courier headed to the Montreal offices of Forsyth, Richardson, and Co. and McTavish, McGillivray, and Co., two firms from the Northwest Fur Company partnership who were deeply invested in merchandise that could be threatened by war with the United States. The merchants passed on the information to the secretary of Sir George Prevost, who forwarded it to Lord Liverpool on the next ship from Quebec.⁸⁸ Another courier, James Vosburgh, travelled to Niagara and crossed the river to deliver Astor's letter to merchant Thomas Clark, who promptly informed Major-General Isaac Brock at Fort George.⁸⁹ Through these commercial dispatches sent by an American, news of the outbreak of war first reached his British trade partners and then the British military. Cooperation across the border, particularly in Niagara, was important enough to the inhabitants and their partners that they risked being accused of collusion with the other side. More significantly, the

⁸⁸ Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3, 73-74.

⁸⁹ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 147.

speedy messages sent in the interest of commerce became a decisive factor in the opening weeks of the war, as discussed in Module 2.⁹⁰

The outbreak of war between Britain and the United States also disrupted the complex familial connections between the communities on each side of the river. Many Loyalist families had migrated from the former colonies and retained significant family ties on the American side of the river. In 1811, Catherine Prendergast moved with her family from Upper Canada to Mayville in Chautauqua County, New York, leaving behind a suitor named William Hamilton Merritt who had been born in the U.S. but chose to remain loyal to the British when the war began. Their relationship was strained throughout the war as Merritt fought for the British and Prendergast begged him to desert and join her in New York. In January 1815, Merritt languished as a prisoner of war and Prendergast lost hope for their future, writing him, “Situating as we now are, it would be folly to suppose we ever shall meet, at least for a number of years.”⁹¹ Fortunately for the two young people, when a declaration of peace was made, they were reunited and married within the year. When the war ended, they returned to Upper Canada and became one of the region’s most influential families of the nineteenth century. For many inhabitants of Upper Canada, the war disrupted trans-national lives that included frequent and common border crossings and close relationships with people who were suddenly redefined as “enemies.” The relationship between Catherine Prendergast and William

⁹⁰ See Module 2 for more information about communication delays in official channels and how commercial messages affected the beginning of the war.

⁹¹ Quoted in Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 410.

Merritt embodied the conflict created during war between national loyalties defined by political boundaries and personal relationships between those on each side.

Women in Niagara

Women living in the Niagara District have a greater presence in print, government documents, and archival collections because they lived in the civic and commercial center of the province at a time when conflict between two nations was intensely focused on their communities. The rapid development of settlements in Niagara supported and improved the commercial viability of the region, which in turn increased the British government's investment in its infrastructure and continued growth. As a result of the expanding population, greater commercial activity, concentration of government and military bureaucracies, and a three-year period of destructive violence, the Niagara District's inhabitants became some of the most well-documented in the province. Some evidence of women's lives and roles in the district before the war have survived in diaries of upper-class women who recorded their travels and activities, family papers, the few newspapers produced in the young province, and legal proceedings. Women's experiences during and after the war are also well-documented due to their efforts seeking aid for their suffering and compensation for their losses. Many women's stories were also passed down through oral traditions in their families and were later recorded in print. The kinds of documentation that survive in the Niagara District are not unique and similar examples can be found throughout Upper Canada. The sheer volume of materials and the depth of information about the inhabitants of Niagara, however, provide invaluable insight into the experiences of women in Upper Canada.

The early years of settlement in Niagara were documented in part by women traveling through the region or living there, even for a brief time. When Anne Powell visited Niagara in 1789 with her brother William on their way to Detroit, she made observations about her surroundings and experiences and later recorded her memories in a journal. She recalled meeting Catherine Hamilton, “an amiable sweet little woman” whom Powell regretted did not live at Detroit, across the river from Sandwich where her brother was taking a position as judge.⁹² As the first and most successful merchant family in the region and frequent hosts to visitors in their substantial house on the escarpment at Queenston, the Hamiltons were commonly mentioned in many travelers’ accounts. Powell also commented on transportation by ship, horse, and cart, and described how goods unloaded at the base of the portage were “drawn up a steep Hill in a Cradle, a Machine I never saw before.”⁹³ Despite her short visit to Niagara, Powell’s recollection and documentation of her journey provide a glimpse into life in the region in the early years, and indicate that even in the 1780s, Niagara was becoming both waypoint and destination for travelers in the province.

The arrival of Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe in Newark, accompanying her husband John in his capacity as lieutenant governor, provides historians with an excellent source of information about the second phase of growth as the temporary capital of the province and about the activities of its inhabitants, particularly those in the upper echelons of frontier society. Simcoe was a prodigious diarist and artist, recording her experiences and

⁹² Anne Powell, “Diary of Anne Powell on Her Voyage from Montreal to Detroit with Her Brother W.D. Powell in the Year 1789” (1789), Jarvis family fonds, 1789-1847, n.d. RG 563. Archives and Special Collections, Brock University, 9.

⁹³ Powell, “Diary,” 10.

observations in written word and depiction. Her descriptions of Newark and the Niagara District provide insight into the growing settlement and the struggles of the early settlers. Upon her arrival, she lamented “I sat by myself in a miserable, unfinished, damp room, looking on the lake, [...] and not a cheerful thought passing through my mind.”⁹⁴ As the Simcoes arranged for their life in Newark, Simcoe grew more comfortable with the town, recording that she played whist, held dances, and dined frequently with other women of upper-class society such as Catherine Hamilton, Catherine McGill, Rachel Crookshank, Madelaine Richardson, and Anne Smith. Many of Simcoe’s observations about the region are focused on the activities of those in her immediate social circle, such as officers and their wives, dignitaries traveling through the area, and other government official. However, she also describes various types of buildings and construction projects, the flora and fauna she encountered, the difficulties of travel at different times of year, and other topics that shaped the lives of all inhabitants of Niagara.

The other particularly useful contribution Elizabeth Simcoe made to the documentation of Niagara were her drawings and paintings of landscapes, houses, forts, and other parts of life in the new settlement. The Archives of Ontario holds 359 artworks by Simcoe, some rough sketches in pencil or ink, others full scenes in watercolor. Her works are some of the only graphic representations of the early settlement in Niagara and often capture subjects that would otherwise be overlooked, such as bridges, mills, Fort Niagara, Navy Hall, ships, sleighs, barracks, and encampments. Her sketches of the house

⁹⁴ Mary Quayle Innis, ed., *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1965), 79.

belonging to Christina and Gilbert Tice on the escarpment near the falls are most likely the only depictions of their home, which was one of the inns along the portage road.



Figure 8 “Mrs. Tice’s House,” [watercolor], ca. 1795, Elizabeth Simcoe loose sketches, Simcoe family fonds, F 47-11-1-0-183, Archives of Ontario.

One painting of the Tice property is a watercolor on birch bark, depicting a house with two chimneys set among trees, with fences, a tent, and pond in the foreground. Simcoe describes in her diary the time she stayed with the Tices, mentioning that the tent was set up for the servants and that she was given a room in the house. Simcoe was pleased with the situation, which she described as “peculiarly dry & healthy” compared to the “intense heat at Navy Hall.”⁹⁵ The trove of sketches and paintings of the new

⁹⁵ Innis, *Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary*, 160.

province that Simcoe created is an invaluable resource for contextualizing the lives of its inhabitants.

Like artwork, which represents an artists' impression of their surroundings, the oral histories and memoirs of Niagara's inhabitants can contain useful insights into their lives but must also be evaluated with care. Stories written from memory or passed down to children and later recorded are subject to faulty recollection, intrusion from outside sources, and personal biases that all shape the final narrative. First-hand accounts from women who lived in Niagara, while rare, provide small glimpses of their lives during the early years of settlement and the war. Through her daughter, Elizabeth Quade's memories of her childhood have been preserved at the local museum and contain her own accounts of familiar scenes. She lived with her family in the lighthouse at Mississauga Point, which the Americans recognized was valuable to both sides and spared during the burning of Newark. Quade recalled, "Many of the people of the town brought furniture and articles of value to our house while the town was burning till the house was full and we could take no more."⁹⁶ She also mentions that on upon the declaration of war, "Some American officers over at Fort George left the King's Wharf near there and parted with sincere regret."⁹⁷ This account seems likely, as it was also recounted in newspapers at the time.⁹⁸ Quade also recounted that British commander Major-General Isaac Brock attended church with an American doctor just before the war and said upon their

⁹⁶ *Records of Niagara Historical Society*, vol. 11, 25 vols., (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1902), 11.

⁹⁷ *Records of Niagara Historical Society*, vol. 11, 11.

⁹⁸ Cruikshank, DHCNF 3, 85.

departure, “Good-Bye, when we meet again we shall be enemies.”⁹⁹ Elizabeth Quade’s recollections demonstrate the close relations between the British and American sides of the river and the subsequent rift caused by the war. Although stories of this kind are often collected through various means and printed much later, these contributions to the history of the town provide a personal perspective on some events and are occasionally the only record of other parts of life in the early years of Niagara.

The growth of settlements in Niagara also created a demand for the institutions that support society rather than industry or commerce directly, such as churches, newspapers, a library, and schools. Providing education was one of the acceptable community roles for women and was also formalized enough to produce some documentary evidence. In 1802, an advertisement by Mr. and Mrs. Tyler informed the public that they would soon be opening “a regular day School and night School” to teach “Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.” The Tylers also specified that “young ladies will be instructed in all that is necessary for persons of their sex to appear decently and be useful in the world, and of all that concerns housekeeping, either for those who wish to live in town or country.” The final lines in the notice also mentioned that Mrs. Tyler had been “bred in the line of mantua maker” and would “execute her work in the neatest manner” for “those who may honor her with their custom.”¹⁰⁰ The advertisement demonstrates many of the facets of women’s lives in Niagara and the ways in which men and women navigated social expectations and gendered expectations to survive. The Tyler’s focus on

⁹⁹ *Records of Niagara Historical Society*, vol. 11, 12.

¹⁰⁰ J. George Hodgins, ed., *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, Printers, 1894), 33.

the proper behavior of young women and preparation for a life of housekeeping in any setting highlights that all women, regardless of their position in society or contribution to the larger community, were expected to keep an orderly house. Their provision of board for students and other people who needed healthy lodgings made use of their land and house to generate income. Finally, they mention Mrs. Tyler's dressmaking skills, yet another socially acceptable way to bring in money. Combining teaching, boarding, and dressmaking to provide for themselves required the contribution of Mrs. Tyler's education and skills, but also upheld the expectations of women's responsibilities and passed them on to the next generation.

While some women's experiences were documented through personal journals and correspondence, many more are represented in official records which resulted from the growth of a provincial bureaucracy centered in the town of Newark. Situated at the northern end of the Niagara River next to Fort George, Newark was the temporary capital of the province when Lieutenant Governor Simcoe chose it as the best place from which to govern. In September 1792, Simcoe convened the first provincial parliament, which he hoped would become a "beneficial Establishment to the Province."¹⁰¹ His ambitions for the province at that time outstripped the capacity of the settlements, as there were few buildings in the town suitable for the legislative session. Yet fewer than nine months later, the second session of parliament met in a new government house, "a large, handsome edifice of wood, containing the chambers of the Legislative Council and Assembly, with all the offices necessary for their use, and for the civil and executive

¹⁰¹ Simcoe, *Correspondence*, 250.

officers of the Government.”¹⁰² Although Simcoe would later move the capital to York (now Toronto) in 1796 to better protect it from the Americans, its short tenure as seat of government ensured that the town of Newark and the entire Niagara District, received an influx of officers, officials, lawyers, magistrates, doctors, merchants, and other professionals whose work generated documents that would survive and provide evidence of the region’s rapid growth and the lives of its inhabitants.

Women as Settlers and Claimants

Another unique feature of the Niagara District is that women participated in settlement of the region by petitioning for and receiving land grants as Loyalists or through their connection to male Loyalists. While some studies of women’s economic power in the colonial era have focused only on “those who had property,” the unique nature of land grants in Upper Canada meant that both widowed and married women participated in the settlement process even if they did not have control over their own property.¹⁰³ The ability to submit land petitions and receive grants may not be considered economic power in the traditional sense but many families nonetheless benefited from women’s power to acquire capital in the form of land. During the early years of settlement in Upper Canada, “Women in their own right, especially unmarried women, were seldom given land.”¹⁰⁴ Yet in J.K. Johnson’s assessment of petitions filed between

¹⁰² Kirby, *Annals of Niagara*, 106.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Carole Shammas, “Early American Women and Control over Capital,” in *Women in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, Perspectives on the American Revolution (Charlottesville: Published for the United States Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1989).

¹⁰⁴ J. K. Johnson, “‘Claims of Equity and Justice’: Petitions and Petitioners in Upper Canada 1815-1840,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 28, no. 55 (1995): 225.

1815 and 1840, women account for 18% of all land petitions, many of which were based on their identity as Loyalists or their position in relation to male Loyalists.¹⁰⁵

Most land petitions submitted by women focused primarily on the Loyalism of their husbands, fathers, brothers, or uncles. Jane McKerlie's 1797 petition began, "Humbly Sheweth That your petitioner is Daughter of Peter McMicken," and concluded, "prays your Honor would be pleased to allow her such a grant of Lands as is generally given to Daughters of Loyalists."¹⁰⁶ The council granted her "200 acres as the daughter of a Loyalist." McKerlie's petition added even more land to the family holdings, as her husband John's earlier petition had resulted in a grant for 200 acres. The trend of husband and wife submitting separate land petitions was relatively common. After John McNabb received a grant for a lot in the town of Newark and 2,000 acres elsewhere, Isabella McNabb submitted an additional petition as "niece to Captain Angus McDonell of the late Regiment of Sir John Johnson's Royal Yorkers, and wife of John McNabb Esquire."¹⁰⁷ The council ordered "in consideration of Petitioner's connections and present situation four hundred acres." The McNabbs also tried to acquire the land previously held by Angus McDonnell after he died but it is unclear whether the land was ever given to them. Although husbands assumed control of married women's property under the principle of coverture, even if the property was granted to them based on their gender as

¹⁰⁵ Established in the 1780s to facilitate settlement, the first Land Boards reviewed and approved petitions for land but were disbanded in 1794 due to claims of improper administration that benefited friends of the board. From that point forward, all petitions were reviewed by the Executive Council of Upper Canada. Library and Archives Canada, "Land Petitions of Upper Canada, 1763-1865," March 22, 2013, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-upper-canada-1763-1865/Pages/land-petitions-upper-canada.aspx>.

¹⁰⁶ RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series M, Bundle 2, 1795-1796, 328A, Petition Number 251.

¹⁰⁷ RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series M, Bundle 2, 1795-1796, 328A, Petition Number 254.

daughters or nieces, women played a unique role in the settlement of Niagara through their acquisition of land.¹⁰⁸

Widowed women also took advantage of the offer of free land to Loyalists and their children. In 1797, Elizabeth Thompson provided a detailed account of her activities during the Revolution to support her petition for a grant of land. Thompson wrote that, “many times at the risk of her life assisted the scouting Parties of Loyalists and Indians with provisions,” and was even “imprisoned at the German Flats on suspicion of concealing spies.”¹⁰⁹ She also mentioned that her father and brother had both served in the British army. Between 1790 and 1804, Thompson submitted numerous petitions to deal with land grant and management issues. She was given Lot 28 in the town of Newark, on which she built two houses, the first having been destroyed when the town was burned during the war. The second house, commonly known as Promenade House, still stands today as one of the few homes built by the original owner of the lot. While Thompson made no explicit reference to her husband, her daughter Anne’s petition for land mentioned that James Thompson had been a Loyalist, along with the rest of his family. Anne received a grant for 200 acres as a daughter of a Loyalist, though it is unclear whether Elizabeth received land outside of Newark.

¹⁰⁸ For further discussion of coverture, see Module 4: Claiming Compensation.

¹⁰⁹ RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series T, Bundle Miscellaneous, 1791-1819, Petition Number 3.



Figure 9 Promenade House, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Karen Whittle and Peter Hewitt, 2021.

Like Thompson, Catherine Clement of Newark included substantial information about her service to the Crown. In her 1795 land petition, she stated that she, her husband, and their five children were “zealous loyalists” during the Revolutionary War. While her husband and sons served in the military, Clement claimed that she too served the cause by “Supplying persons employed on secret Service with provisions & Intelligence and in forwarding letters to & from persons in the States for the information of Government.”¹¹⁰ The response recorded on the documents does not mention anything

¹¹⁰ RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series C, Bundle 2, 1796-1797, 90, Petition Number 155.

about Clement directly, but states that 2,000 acres had already been granted to the heirs of Lewis Clement and so the petition was considered answered.

Clement was dissatisfied with the council's decision, perhaps because she was not given any portion of the previous land. She submitted two new land petitions in 1797. The first again focused on her activities during the war, such as having "forwarded several dispatches in His Majestys [sic] Service" and other supportive actions but the petition was denied based on the previous grant of land based on her husband and sons service.¹¹¹ The council wrote, "the Board cannot grant specifically to her without deviating from the Rules they have laid down for their Conduct in the land granting Department."¹¹² Presumably, the council reviewed the grants made to the Clement family, noted that land had been granted to James Clement and his children, and so Elizabeth was not considered eligible for another grant, regardless of whether she actually held any of the land previously awarded. This demonstrates the underlying assumption held by the council that land grants made to men (husbands or sons) would necessarily provide for dependent women. Only in situations where there were no male relatives on which to depend were women considered eligible for their own grants.

Despite these principles, however, Clement's third petition was successful, with only the brief comment, "Recommend for 300 acres family land."¹¹³ This final petition, which seemingly succeeded in securing a land grant for Clement herself, made no mention of her service or loyalty during the war, but instead focused on her children upon

¹¹¹ RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series C, Bundle 2, 1796-1797, 90, Petition Number 109.

¹¹² RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series C, Bundle 2, 1796-1797, 90, Petition Number 109.

¹¹³ RG1 L3, Volume 90, Series C, Bundle 2, 1796-1797, 90, Petition Number 139.

whom she had relied since her husband died and who were now settled in the province. Since it seems unlikely that the rules had changed, the council may have finally relented to Clement's insistence that her children were not providing for her and that she needed land of her own to survive. Clement's two-year battle with the Executive Council to provide security for herself demonstrates her resiliency and determination to find support from the country for which she had served and sacrificed.

The persistence that Clement demonstrated in her pursuit of a land grant is also visible in the war loss claims submitted by women of Niagara after the War of 1812. The Board of Claims for Losses (BCL) appointed in 1823 to review war loss claims produced one of the most extensive collections of documents related to civilian life before and during the war. The archival collection includes over 27,000 pages of material such as handwritten claims, supporting statements, signed affidavits, reports, summaries, registers, indexes, minutes, and vouchers.¹¹⁴ A more complete exploration of the contents of these war loss claims can be found in Module 4, but a brief examination of the collection itself offers insight into the distinction between Niagara and other districts in Upper Canada in how women's experiences were documented. Among the districts that were affected by the war, Niagara suffered more than any other, both in number of inhabitants experiencing losses and in total value of lost property. Following the war, the board reviewed 2055 claims submitted by inhabitants of Upper Canada seeking compensation for losses incurred during the war by either enemy or friendly forces.

¹¹⁴ For more information on Board of Commissioners and the archival collection, see [Technical Module: Library of Canada Materials](#).

Inhabitants of Niagara submitted 678 (33%) of those claims for a total of £182,169 in losses, which is about 45.5% of the total losses for the province. The districts with the next highest number of claims were Western (20.2%), Gore (15.1%), and London (14.4%), with combined losses of £160,236 (40% of total losses).¹¹⁵ These figures indicate that the Niagara District suffered more widespread and substantial losses than any other district, which means it also produced more documentation of its inhabitants' experiences.

In particular, the experiences of women in Niagara are over-represented in the war loss claims. Women from thirty-eight different townships across seven districts of Upper Canada submitted or inherited 166 (8%) of all claims. 89 (53.6%) of those claims were submitted by inhabitants of Niagara, accounting for 13.1% of the claims from that district. In comparison, only twenty-five claims from the Western District have female claimants or administrators, representing only 6% of the claims in that district. The higher percentage of women's claims in Niagara results from two combining factors: the intensity of the war in the district and the number of men from that region killed during the war. The value of losses in Niagara account for nearly half of all losses, suggesting that the extent of plundering and burning was more extreme in that district. Inhabitants of

¹¹⁵ These figures may be somewhat inaccurate because Gore District was created in 1816 from townships previously in Niagara and Home Districts. Claims from townships like Saltfleet, Ancaster, and Barton could be categorized in either Niagara or Gore, whereas York township could be either Home or Gore. This discrepancy may account for differences in the tallies produced in other studies of the claims. Legare considers Ancaster, Barton, and Saltfleet as part of Niagara, whereas Sheppard includes Gore in his tally without commenting on the possibility of split categories. While Legare's approach is preferable, her tallies do not include figures for the entire province to provide for comparison. Because this study focuses on claims submitted by women in Niagara, the distribution of claims throughout the province used here is synthesized from Sheppard's work, but the specific analysis is based on a subset of the original claims. See Legare, "From the Ashes," and Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*.

Niagara account for one third of all claims, indicating that the destruction touched more lives in that district. Finally, while women across the province suffered losses during the war and then took advantage of the war loss claim process to seek compensation, women in Niagara represent at least double the percentage of claims from that district compared to others. When combined with contemporary accounts from diaries, letters, and other legal documents, the claims submitted by women of Niagara provide invaluable insight into their experiences before, during, and after the war. Through these accounts, we can better understand how the war affected women in Upper Canada and how they worked amid destruction and displacement to preserve their families, communities, and the entire province.



Figure 10 War loss claims with female claimants or administrators by district (166 total)

Unique yet Representative

In the preface to Janet Carnochan’s *History of Niagara*, Arthur H. U. Colquhoun argues that the “local narrative is in itself of wide interest because Niagara is a kind of mother-colony, and from it have gone forth to other parts of Canada families and individuals retaining memories and traditions of the early settlement.”¹¹⁶ The rapid

¹¹⁶ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, v.

growth of Niagara from a few barrack huts into the center of commerce in Upper Canada in fewer than twenty years was the result of numerous interacting factors unique to that specific place and time. Yet the resulting population density and administrative apparatus of Niagara ensured that the experiences of its inhabitants, similar in many ways to those living in smaller, more remote communities, would survive in written records, graphic depictions, and oral traditions. As an archivist for the historical society in Newark (or Niagara-on-the-Lake, as it is now called), Carnochan had access to many of these resources to help her represent the stories of her town and region, but like many early twentieth century historians, she did not attempt to understand, contextualize, or analyze the people and events about which she wrote. Even when examined more critically, however, Niagara remains an important focal point in exploring the experiences of women in Upper Canada, particularly those who endured the hardships of war, and improving our understanding of the women's contribution to settlement in the province more broadly. Through the surviving materials that document the lives of Niagara's inhabitants, it is possible not only to "reconstruct in the mind's eye what Canada was like more than a century ago" but also to better understand and emphasize the importance of women in the success of the settlement, the survival of their communities during the war, and the regrowth of places devastated by war.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, v-vi.

MODULE 2: “NOWHERE TO PLACE THEIR HEADS”¹¹⁸

On a cold December night in the town of Newark, two women and seven children stood in the snow watching as fire gutted the large brick house in which they had lived and consumed all their possessions. With nowhere to go, they were all “exposed for three days & nights upon the snow with the Canopy of Heaven for a covering.”¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Campbell and Charlotte Dickson had joined their households during the American occupation of their town in 1813, moving the Campbells into the larger Dickson home. They could not have expected that a sudden American retreat would force them out into the cold, destroy their property, and leave them without shelter. The entire town was made homeless in one fell swoop and the inhabitants fought desperately to keep their families alive by finding whatever shelter they could and salvaging what they could from the ashes. This moment was a turning point in the War of 1812 for civilians who lived in any region that became a battleground. Although the inhabitants of Niagara had suffered from military appropriations and looting during the previous year of invasions and occupation, the burning of Newark forced hundreds of women and children into the “severe frost and snow” to watch helplessly as their possessions and homes were reduced to ash.¹²⁰ Those women and their families struggled to survive displacement and loss in

¹¹⁸ Taken from an excerpt in the *New York Evening Post* describing the burning of Niagara: “The destruction and misery which this dastardly conduct has occasioned is scarcely to be described, women and children being the principal inhabitants have nowhere to place their heads.” Quoted in Cruikshank, *DHCNF*, vol. 8, 265.

¹¹⁹ Alex Stewart to Alexander Wood, July 25, 1823, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/8F51DFA0-0CFA-4103-A64A-489815560330>.

¹²⁰ The description of “severe frost and snow” is taken from a published letter describing the purpose of burning the town, which was to deny shelter to an approaching British force. “National Intelligencer, January 22d, 1814,” in Cruikshank, *DHCNF*, vol. 9, 57.

the months that followed but were soon joined in their plight by thousands of other inhabitants on both sides of the border who suffered similar losses in a series of vengeful campaigns of burning. The first year of the war had been relatively mild for most inhabitants of Niagara and they perhaps had hope that the conflict would be short-lived and require only minor sacrifices. From May 1813 onward, however, they experienced severe deprivation and displacement resulting from extensive looting and burning that would shape public perceptions and memories of the war.

This module argues that women experienced more difficult circumstances in the Niagara District due to three interconnected and compounding factors. First, while Niagara was only one of three main targets in the American war strategy, it became the center of the northern theater when the other two campaigns stalled. The invasion from Detroit failed completely and attacks across the St. Lawrence River were delayed for months, increasing pressure on the American officers along the Niagara River to launch an invasion, capture key fortifications, and weaken the British position in Upper Canada. Their ability to accomplish that goal was hampered by internal conflict between regular and militia officers, disagreements over how best to conduct the war, and ideological differences. Once American soldiers were in British territory, the resulting lack of cohesion and control led to unauthorized looting and violence against civilians, accidental and intentional miscommunications that led to widespread destruction, and subsequent retaliation by the British.

The second contributing factor was the extensive reliance on militia to fill the ranks of both armies. On the American side, officers had difficulty organizing an

invasion because many militiamen were determined that they would only serve on American soil in defense of their nation. When faced with the challenge of convincing New York militia to cross the river, the Secretary of War wrote, “What are you to expect from militia draughts with their constitutional scruples?”¹²¹ The British also called up significant numbers of local men to serve but had difficulty keeping men at their posts for a very different reason. Despite adopting a defensive posture that was more acceptable to militiamen, British officers struggled to balance the need for soldiers with the need for food and supplies provided by local farms. Once the fighting began in Niagara, local men were called away from their farms for extended periods, were sometimes forced to accompany the army in retreats, or were captured and imprisoned by the enemy. During this period, women provided the labor needed to plant and harvest crops in addition to their regular work of maintaining a household, producing and laundering clothes, and feeding their families. They were also left more vulnerable to looting and destruction, often forced to choose between defending their homes as best they could or fleeing to safety.

The third factor contributing to the great extent of loss and displacement in Niagara was widespread appropriation, looting, and burning that escalated as the war dragged on. Both the British and American armies were reliant on local farms to provide as much food as possible for military stores because transporting supplies to the frontier was slow and prone to disruption. The military took crops to feed troops, used homes and barns as barracks, pressed wagons and teams into service, and often could not or chose

¹²¹ Secretary of War to General McClure, November 25, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF*, vol. 8, 235.

not to compensate inhabitants for their losses. Soldiers who were unhappy on army rations were also not above nighttime theft of unsecured food and animals from the residents they were supposed to be protecting. The extended periods of occupation by the British and American armies meant that many inhabitants of Niagara suffered losses to both sides. Following the first successful American invasion, lack of command authority led to increases in looting as foraging soldiers roamed the countryside undeterred by official orders protecting personal property. Similarly, a lack of regular soldiers and reliance on militia who were constantly deserting to return to their farms meant that American commanders offered commissions to disaffected locals who were given free rein to terrorize the district by looting, capturing, and imprisoning their former political enemies. These infamous Canadian Volunteers were also enthusiastic participants in the burning of Newark, which initiated a series of vengeful conflagrations on both sides of the border.

At the outset of the war, people in the Niagara District occupied a position of relative security within the province. The river created a natural barrier that could be easily defended, farmers produced sufficient crops to feed residents and soldiers, and the district boasted a large population that could take up arms to defend their land. The inhabitants also expected that their king and government would send additional forces to help repel an invasion. For the first year of the war, that security remained intact, and hopes were high that the British could easily defend the border and prevent the war from reaching the district. Despite causing the death of Major-General Brock, the first attempt at invasion was repulsed and the Americans kept at bay. But by 1813 external pressure

began to build and the inhabitants of Niagara faced invasion and occupation. While few may have hoped to escape the war unscathed, none could have predicted the severity of looting and burning that they would experience in the final three years of the war. Any expectation of civility was lost when soldiers forced women and children into the night to endure freezing temperatures while homes were reduced to ash. Though the war brought suffering to the doors of people across Upper Canada, women in Niagara were at the epicenter of destruction.

Invading and Plundering

The first major invasion of Upper Canada occurred in the Western District, where an initial successful venture from Detroit quickly deteriorated into a retreat and subsequent surrender, damaging the American war strategy from its start. General William Hull's brief campaign in the west was hampered from the beginning by communication issues. Notice of the declaration of war reached the British Major-General Isaac Brock through commercial communication two days before his American counterparts on the other side received their own official orders. With a slight advantage in timing, the British were able to capture a small vessel with Hull's baggage and correspondence before he even knew they were at war. Although Hull was able to cross the Detroit River and occupy the town of Sandwich for a few weeks, the capture of his plans limited the element of surprise, allowing Brock to prepare and send reinforcements from Niagara.

The British were also able to make their slight timing advantage productive by capturing the most northern American outpost at Fort Michilimackinac. The commander

positioned a cannon on a hilltop overlooking the fort and then sent a messenger with a declaration of war and terms of surrender.¹²² When he received word that the northern fort had been captured, Hull became concerned that “a large Indian and Canadian force may be expected from Mackinack.”¹²³ Fearing an attack from the north and reinforcements arriving from Niagara, Hull abandoned his invasion plan and retreated to Detroit, where he was soon surrounded and forced to surrender to the combined forces led by Brock and native chief Tecumseh. The commercial couriers that provided advance notice of the war, even by a few days, had given the British forces enough advantage to bolster their defenses, send orders out to more remote positions, and claim the first victories of the war. Hull’s invasion of the Western District failed to accomplish any strategic goals and increased pressure on the officers responsible for the Niagara campaign.

The first failed campaign of the war also raised anti-American sentiment due to looting in the Western District. Although many American commanders began the war with hope that the settlers of the new province would view the invaders as a liberating force and join in rebellion against the British, the plundering of civilian homes and farms quickly turned sympathy to apathy or resistance. When Hull crossed the Detroit River, he issued a proclamation that he hoped would encourage cooperation: “To the peaceful unoffending inhabitant, It brings neither danger nor difficulty I come to find enemies not

¹²² Captain Roberts to Major-General Brock, July 17, 1812. E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *Documents Relating to the Invasion of Canada and the Surrender of Detroit, 1812* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1913), 66.

¹²³ Brigadier-General Hull to the Secretary of War, August 8, 1812. Cruikshank, *Detroit*, 126.

to make them, I come to protect not to injure you.”¹²⁴ His promises were intended to encourage militia to refrain from fighting and were initially effective, convincing about half of the British militia to abandon their posts and return home.¹²⁵ He also hoped to dissuade the native warriors allied with Britain by promising that their land would be untouched if they remained neutral, a tactic that was also somewhat successful and reduced the number of warriors from Upper Canada who joined the British counter-offensive.

Hull might have been able to capitalize on his success had he not allowed and perhaps encouraged his men to plunder the homes and farms around their temporary fortification in Sandwich.¹²⁶ Francois Baby was one of the more prominent residents of Sandwich and was acquainted with the Americans who “encamped on his farm, taking possession of his dwelling and out Houses, destroying his Orchards & fences and in every manner, to all appearance, purposely injured the premises.” Apparently punishing Baby for siding with the British at Amherstburg, the soldiers “also plundered and carried off with them, on recrossing the Detroit, his moveable property, even that which he had concealed in several private houses at some distance from his residence.”¹²⁷ The inhabitants of the Western District might have given consideration to the promises that Hull made but they were also skeptical of the invaders and expected to suffer looting or violence, especially if they were known to have association with the British army. An

¹²⁴ Proclamation of Brigadier General Hull, July 13, 1812, in Cruikshank, *Detroit*, 60.

¹²⁵ Colonel Elliott to Colonel Claus, July 15, 1812, in Cruikshank, *Detroit*, 62.

¹²⁶ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 161.

¹²⁷ Francois Baby, Claim No. 1196. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3752, File 3, 1823.

American officer was later reported to say, “Nearly all the inhabitants had left when we crossed over and the few that remained had removed all their best property to the woods and swamps.”¹²⁸ When inhabitants’ homes were looted and their fears justified, the inhabitants of the Western District who might have initially been receptive to the American invasion became disenchanted and more supportive of British defense of the province. The failure of the first attempted invasion of Upper Canada not only damaged the American war strategy but set a precedent of looting that persisted in each invasion and occupation that followed.

An American raid on York, the new capital of the province, further confirmed that inhabitants of Upper Canada should expect the invaders to step heavily around their homes and farms. In April 1813, a fleet from Sacket’s Harbor at the eastern end of Lake Ontario set out to assault York and capture a newly constructed ship. The outnumbered British regulars retreated to Kingston, setting fire to a partially finished ship and the powder stores, which exploded and killed over 200 American soldiers. Over the next two days, while the local officials and American officers negotiated the articles of capitulation, American soldiers looted and set fire to the government buildings.¹²⁹ The British army would later use the burnings at York (and Newark) as justification for setting fire to public buildings in Washington, D.C. in 1814. While no private homes were burned during the occupation of York, these events further established the image of

¹²⁸ “Extracts from an American Newspaper, August and September, 1812,” in Cruikshank, *Detroit*, 106.

¹²⁹ For a thorough description of the capture of York, see Charles W. Humphries, “The Capture of York,” *Ontario History* 51 (1959): 1–21.

American soldiers disobeying orders, setting fires to enemy buildings and supplies, and threatening civilians.

The inhabitants of York who were left to deal with the aftermath of the explosion also suffered the plundering of their personal property, which became a common occurrence in every contested territory during the war. Soldiers stole from Elizabeth Andrews all her clothing and some silver dishes, estimated in value at £25.¹³⁰ Mary Marshall, who was employed as the housekeeper at Elmsley House where the Executive Council of Upper Canada kept offices, witnessed the plundering of apparel, bedding, utensils, and silver spoons, medals, and watches amounting to £56. She was fortunate to know personally many of the men who later served on the board of commissioners, as they recommended her claim for approval because they were “present at York when the enemy landed” and “fully satisfied of the fairness of the statement.”¹³¹ Marshall later married widower Patrick Hartney, who was injured in the explosion and also suffered losses when American soldiers broke into his home to steal bedding, curtains, a stove, clothes, and furniture.¹³² One merchant caught soldiers looting his storehouse, but when he approached an American officer to seek redress, he was told that “there was ammunition in his store which was always considered lawful booty, whether private property or not.”¹³³ The fact that he was robbed of many other goods did not seem to

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Andrews, Claim No. 282. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3744, File 2, 1823.

¹³¹ Mary Marshall, Claim No. 32. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3740, File 2, 1823

¹³² Patrick Hartney, Claim No. 33. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3740, File 2, 1823. It is interesting to note that Mary Marshall and Patrick Hartney were married in 1814, but filed their claims and received compensation separately.

¹³³ Charles W. Humphries, “The Capture of York,” *Ontario History* 51 (1959): 13.

matter. In total, about twenty-three homes and businesses were looted during the two days of enemy occupation in York, in violation of the articles of capitulation that had been signed by both sides. When confronted with the reports of plundering, American General Henry Dearborn stated that he had “issued the strictest orders to the contrary” but to those around him “it was evident that the great degree of insubordination that prevailed among his troops rendered such orders of no effect.”¹³⁴

Although most of the looting occurred in homes that had been abandoned during the fighting, some residents who remained were also threatened with acts of violence while their homes were plundered. Angelique Givens had been left with her children at their home in Pine Grove, about a mile north of the garrison. Her husband James was a militia officer and Indian Department official, so he had left when the British force retreated. During the occupation, William Dummer Powell came upon Givens “in great distress having been driven from her home by a Party of Plunderers who had threatened her Life.”¹³⁵ He also observed one of the soldiers being captured when the perpetrator returned to the house a second time and was found in possession of a stolen silver cup and a mirror. Powell escorted Givens to the American headquarters to seek protection, but Dearborn informed them that “it was not in his Power to protect her in her own House & recommended strongly that she would not return to it.”¹³⁶ Givens also sought out Reverend John Strachan, who had been working to prevent looting, but their appeal to

¹³⁴ Colonel William Allan, Untitled Manuscript, May 8, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 5:192.

¹³⁵ William Dummer Powell, Witness Statement, in Claim No. 234. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 2, 1823.

¹³⁶ William Dummer Powell, Witness Statement, in Claim No. 234. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 2, 1823.

Dearborn was again rebuffed with the excuse that he could not “guarantee protection to any persons connected with the Indians.”¹³⁷ Rather than admit that he could not keep control of the soldiers under his command, Dearborn blamed the victims of looting for their connections with the British military, government, or native allies. Although many Americans believed that the inhabitants of Upper Canada would welcome them as liberators, the American force that departed York left behind a town full of inhabitants embittered by plundering and burning who might otherwise have harbored sympathy for Republican ideals.

Looting Niagara

In the Niagara District, expectations of cooperation from local inhabitants clashed with the reality that ideologies often took less precedence than personal safety and property. Early in the war, officials and officers on both sides of the conflict were cautiously optimistic that the average settler of Upper Canada would support and fight for their side, either in defense of Britain or as welcome recipients of American liberty. Major-General Isaac Brock reported in 1811 that in Niagara he had “received the most satisfactory professions of a determination on the part of the principal inhabitants to exert every means in their power in defence of their property and support of the Government.”¹³⁸ Once the war began, however, farmers were forced to leave their fields when called up for militia service and Brock “prepared to hear of much discontent in consequence.”¹³⁹ Support for the British government among the local residents fluctuated

¹³⁷ Charles W. Humphries, “The Capture of York,” *Ontario History* 51 (1959): 12.

¹³⁸ Major-General Isaac Brock to Sir George Prevost, December 2, 1811, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3:21.

¹³⁹ Major-General Brock to Sir George Prevost, July 26, 1812, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3:143.

with the threat of invasion, need for militia service, and appropriations of food or supplies.

The inhabitants of Upper Canada were also unconvinced by the Americans' promises of protection for private property: the scenes of looting from every invasion or raid directly contradicted those guarantees. Even after his missteps at York, Dearborn remained convinced that "a large majority [of inhabitants] are friendly to the United States and fixed in their hatred against the Government of Great Britain."¹⁴⁰ While severely overestimating the number of sympathetic inhabitants, he was not entirely wrong that some Upper Canadians were open to switching sides for personal gain. In a successful surprise attack on Newark and Fort George in May 1813, the Americans gained control of the Niagara River from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie while the British retreated to Burlington Heights (now Hamilton). Several men in Upper Canada who had grievances with their fellow Britons chose to support and even fight alongside the Americans, hoping that a change in governance would benefit themselves and bring misfortune to their foes. Because they relied so heavily on militia who were reluctant to cross the border and rarely extended their service into additional terms, the American commanders granted commissions and enlisted local volunteers like Joseph Willcocks, a former sheriff and member of provincial parliament with opinions about arbitrary rule and liberty that had put him in opposition to more conservative Upper Canadians.¹⁴¹ Regular army officers recognized the importance of the newly formed Canadian

¹⁴⁰ General Dearborn to Governor Tompkins, June 8, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 6:55.

¹⁴¹ Elwood H. Jones, "Willcocks, Joseph," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1983), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/willcocks_joseph_5E.html.

Volunteers and recommended the “use of the zeal, activity, and local knowledge which Colonel Willcocks certainly possesses to counteract the machinations of our enemy, and ensure the confidence of our friends amongst the inhabitants.”¹⁴²

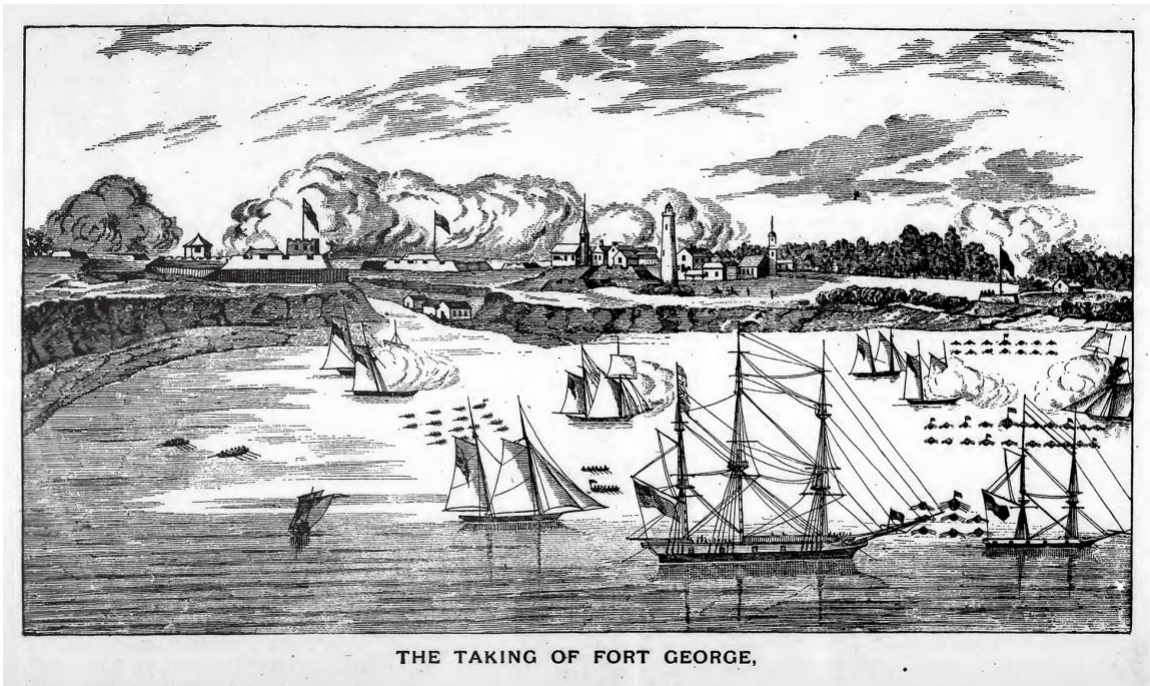


Figure 11 E. A. Cruikshank, “The Battle of Fort George,” in *Transactions* No. 1, vol. 1, 44 vols., Niagara Historical Society (Niagara: Pickwell Bros., 1896). Originally published in John Elihu Hall, ed., “The Taking of Fort George,” *The Port Folio* IV (August 1817)

In the 1817 depiction of the Battle of Fort George seen in Figure 11, American soldiers are depicted landing on the far right, which was out of range for the cannons of Fort George on the other side of Newark, seen in the center. The lighthouse and two church steeples are visible along with other buildings in the town. In December 1813, the

¹⁴² General Harrison to General McClure, November 15, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 8:195.

Americans burned all the buildings in the town except for the lighthouse. The stone walls of St. Mark's Anglican Church survived the fires, and the church was later rebuilt.

Rather than ensure the confidence of sympathetic locals, the Canadian Volunteers routinely plundered and raided the surrounding countryside and stole from their former neighbors. These acts directly contradicted proclamations about protections for private property and undermined the American goal of gaining support from local inhabitants to overthrow British tyranny. In Grantham township on the shore of Lake Ontario, Willcocks and his men took a horse from the farm of Margaret Darby, whose husband George had died just months earlier.¹⁴³ Across the district near the town of St. David's, they stole eight cattle from Joseph and Frances Page.¹⁴⁴ Both the Pages and Margaret Darby named Willcocks specifically in their claim to the board of commissioners. One British officer denounced the Canadian Volunteers as "a lawless banditti, composed of the disaffected of the country organized under the direct influence of the American Government, who carried terror and dismay into every family."¹⁴⁵ For the inhabitants of Niagara who had been promised protection by American commanders, being looted by men who had been their neighbors added insult to injury.

In addition to suffering at the hands of a roaming band of Canadian Volunteers, inhabitants of Niagara were also affected by the lack of authority and coordination between American officers that resulted in excessive raiding and looting. The need to

¹⁴³ Margaret Darby, Claim No. 259. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3744, File 1, 1823.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph and Frances Page, Claim No. 217. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 2, 1823.

¹⁴⁵ Colonel John Murray to Major-General Vincent, December 12, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 8:270.

raise large forces of militia gave wide latitude to individuals who could rally men to their personal causes. One of the most notorious was Dr. Cyrenius Chapin, a resident of Buffalo whose name became “synonymous with destruction.”¹⁴⁶ Chapin organized a force of mounted militia that conducted cross-border raids, participated in skirmishes, and staged a daring escape after being captured. Despite being admired by some, the company earned a reputation as uncontrollable marauders and the nickname “Dr. Chapin’s Forty Thieves.”¹⁴⁷ One observer wrote, “The infamous Chapin has obtained the command of a company of militia who refused to consider themselves under the authority of the officer commanding the frontier.”¹⁴⁸

Chapin’s looting caused distress and suffering for the inhabitants of Niagara and damaged the American military operations in that region. Arrested on the orders of General McClure, Chapin was freed by his local followers and led a mob against McClure, who reported, “Since dismissing him and his marauding corps he has been guilty of the most outrageous acts of mutiny if not of *treason*.”¹⁴⁹ McClure soon abandoned his command, but Chapin remained until the British captured him at Buffalo and sent him to prison in Quebec. Chapin was not the only officer to ignore or misinterpret orders regarding the protection of private property, but his notoriety earned

¹⁴⁶ “The Devil for Us All – Dr. Cyrenius Chapin,” *Niagara 1812 Legacy Council* (blog), September 24, 2014, <http://discover1812.blogspot.com/2014/09/the-devil-for-us-all-dr-cyrenius-chapin.html>.

¹⁴⁷ “From the Journal of Major Isaac Roach, Published in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, July, 1893,” in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 6:149.

¹⁴⁸ John C. Spencer to Governor Tompkins, December 26, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:52-53. Reports about the acts of terror that Chapin’s and Willcock’s volunteers committed did not include any mention of sexual assault. While such acts may have occurred and not been reported, they are conspicuously absent from official or public accounts that often focused on outrages committed against civilians.

¹⁴⁹ General McClure to the Secretary of War, December 25, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:46.

him disdain among his fellow officers and made him the most infamous American raider in the northern theater.

Chapin's raiders and the Canadian Volunteers also participated in a large-scale program to identify and imprison local men. When the Americans captured Fort George in May 1813, General Dearborn issued paroles for any local man who requested one and met with local magistrates to approve their continued public service in the district.¹⁵⁰ In June, however, he received word from the Secretary of War to treat all male inhabitants as potential militiamen and ordered his men to scour the district and make arrests. Throughout the district, soldiers rounded up about one hundred men, including some militia, farmers, magistrates, lawyers, merchants, clergy, a young boy, and an old man. Most of this activity was carried out by "Chapin's and Willcocks's volunteers, with whom discipline was lax, and many outrages were committed. The inhabitants were insulted, maltreated, and pillaged mercilessly."¹⁵¹ Although the practice of imprisoning or paroling regular soldiers and militia was common, the arrest of ordinary men who had not served in the military was particularly galling, especially to those who had met with Dearborn in May. William Dickson, a justice of the peace, wrote to Dearborn hoping to clear up what he hoped was a misunderstanding. Dearborn rebuffed his query by stating that the imprisonment "resulted only from an obvious departure" from the agreed upon behavior.¹⁵² No proof of misconduct was offered but the men were shipped to prison in Greenbush, New York.

¹⁵⁰ For more on paroles in Niagara, see chapter four in Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*.

¹⁵¹ E. A. Cruikshank, *The Fight in the Beechwoods: A Study of Canadian History* (Welland: W. T. Sawle and Co., Printers, 1895), 9.

¹⁵² "Correspondence Between Hon. William Dickson Prisoner of War and Gen. Dearborn, 1813," in

In a letter published in the *Baltimore Whig* and reprinted in the *New York Evening Post*, an American observer applauded the precautions taken against “violent British partisans in this town and vicinity. The most conspicuous are taken up and sent over the river to be kept in the United States as hostages.”¹⁵³ Although meant to convey pride in actions against the enemy, the letter ignored the reality of the situation and unwittingly captured the true nature of the event: the men of Niagara were being held as hostages rather than prisoners of war. They had not been captured in a battle, many had not served in the military at all, and some were either too old or too young to serve. They were hardly “conspicuous” partisans. What separates this event most from precedents in other wars of the colonial era is that the war being fought in Niagara was not a civil war or revolution in which the local inhabitants could be considered traitors for simply being on the other side of the conflict.¹⁵⁴ Many of the men who were rounded up and imprisoned were merely lumped in with actual militia whose arrest at least reflected an accepted practice. Moreover, the order to arrest any eligible male unintentionally provided a pretext for abuses of power by men who were motivated by personal gain and revenge rather than adherence to civility and order.

The wholesale imprisonment of men throughout the district placed many women of the district in the unfortunate circumstance of tending homes and farms on their own

Records of Niagara Historical Society, vol. 28 (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1915), 2.
¹⁵³ “Extract of a Letter to the Editors of the *Baltimore Whig* Dated Newark, June 22, 1813,” *New York Evening Post*, July 9, 1813, NYS Historic Newspapers, 3. The letter was published without the name of the author.

¹⁵⁴ T. Cole Jones argues that although the Revolution began with similar principles about prisoners of war on both sides, the conflict shifted into a civil war, prompting revolutionaries to perceive and treat loyalists as traitors. See chapter three in T. Cole Jones, *Captives of Liberty: Prisoners of War and the Politics of Vengeance in the American Revolution*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

while also coping with looting by American soldiers and their native allies. When Susannah Alexander's husband Hugh, a prominent merchant with shops in Stamford and Fort Erie, was taken prisoner and sent to Buffalo, she remained in their home despite the risk of looting. Martha Rorbach, whose own house had been plundered after her husband had left with the retreating British army, joined Alexander at her house and witnessed "parties of the Enemy (volunteers and Indians) at different times [...] forcibly take and carry away Several Waggon Loads and Horse Loads of Merchandise, wearing apparel, bedding and Household furniture."¹⁵⁵ Around the same time, Alexander encountered Edward Hunt on the road and asked him if he could "save as much of her property as he could provided the Americans should attempt to plunder her House or Merchant Shop."¹⁵⁶ Hunt was present when the shop and house were later looted, but was unable to convince the soldiers to stop. Alexander herself managed to save "one waggon Load of [goods], which she was induced and enabled, with a view of preserving them from plunder, to send to Buffalo in charge of her father in Law."¹⁵⁷ Despite her efforts, the Alexanders lost most of their personal property, including their house, stable, store house, and bake house as well as merchandise from Hugh's businesses, an estimated total loss of more than £2,600 (about £183,200 in real wealth today).¹⁵⁸ Like many other inhabitants

¹⁵⁵ Martha Rorbach, Witness Statement, in Claim No. 548. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3747, File 3, 1823.

¹⁵⁶ Edward Hunt, Witness Statement, Claim No. 548. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3747, File 3, 1823.

¹⁵⁷ Susannah Alexander, Claim No. 548. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3747, File 3, 1823.

¹⁵⁸ The number of women in Niagara who sought compensation for looting may have been higher, but many claims do not provide sufficient detail to determine exactly who committed the acts of plunder. The present value equivalents provided here are calculated using "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1270 to Present," *Measuring Worth* (<https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>) which defines "real price" as "the relative cost of a (fixed over time) bundle of goods and services such as food,

of Niagara, Hugh and Susannah Alexander submitted claims to the board of commissioners, who set their own lower valuation of the losses.

Approximately eighteen women in Niagara suffered plundering and looting by Americans or their native allies during the war and later submitted claims to seek compensation from the British government, ranging in value from £7 to over £100 (about £500 to £7,000 today).¹⁵⁹ In 1813, American soldiers looted the farm of Hannah Hill in Thorold, taking a horse, cattle, sheep, hogs, oats, wheat, a kettle, sheets, and cheese, for a total loss of about £107. Hill's claim specifically names General McClure, General Peter B. Porter, and Captain Wilson, suggesting that she was familiar with the commanding officers overseeing the occupation of the district and may have been personally acquainted with those who looted her farm.¹⁶⁰ The claim submitted by Anne Graham also mentions the general in command of the troops who plundered her farm, but also includes a uncommon witness statement that further demonstrates the familiarity between the suffering inhabitants and their assailants. In a statement by American Lieutenant John Shortridge of the 1st Rifle Regiment, he admits that his force "took Eighteen Waggons & lightly loaded them with forrage consisting of Corn Wheat Oats & Hay, also about twenty Dragoons Loaded their horses with oats in the sheaf from a barn the property of the Widow Graham for the use of the U.S. Army."¹⁶¹ The signed statement is dated

shelter, clothing, etc., that an average household would buy." In general, real price equivalency provides the lowest values compared to labor value, income value, or economic share.

¹⁵⁹ "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1270 to Present," *Measuring Worth* (<https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>)

¹⁶⁰ Hannah Hill, Claim No. 441. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3746, File 2, 1823.

¹⁶¹ Anne Graham, Claim No. 770. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3749, File 3, 1823.

October 1814 at Fort Erie, which was at the time controlled by the Americans, so we can only speculate why he provided the account or how Graham came to possess it. When taken along with other witness statements, Shortridge's admission was undoubtedly helpful in persuading the board of commissioners to approve compensation for Graham's losses. On average, women who submitted claims for losses incurred by Americans looting their homes and farms lost about £53 or about £3,700 today.¹⁶²

While already coping with American soldiers or their native allies looting homes and farms, the inhabitants of Niagara also had to endure billeting of soldiers, appropriations, and theft by the British army, which demanded loyalty and cooperation from inhabitants by day while its soldiers stole from them at night. During the repeated advances and retreats of both armies in the Niagara region, many townships changed hands multiple times, leaving the inhabitants vulnerable to repeated looting that was often justified as supporting the war effort or else depriving the enemy of resources. At least twenty-four women in Niagara submitted claims that included some losses incurred by British troops or native allies. Some losses were caused by the impressment of civilian property into military service. Azubah Haiger's wagon and harness were taken by General Vincent during a retreat and were never returned. She applied for compensation after the war and her claim was approved.¹⁶³ Similarly, Abigail Anger's team of two horses, a wagon, and harness were also used to carry soldiers and their wives during the retreat to Burlington Bay. However, when the team and wagon were then captured by the

¹⁶² "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1270 to Present," *Measuring Worth* (<https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>)

¹⁶³ Azubah Haiger, Claim No. 348. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3745, File 1, 1823.

Americans, any chance Anger might have had to see her property returned by the British army was lost.¹⁶⁴ These cases of appropriation and subsequent loss were common for the inhabitants of Niagara, whose relationship with their so-called defenders was continually strained.

Rebecca Allison's experiences are an exceptional example of the imposition of British troops in Niagara. Her home in St. David's was used as a barracks and mess house for British officers at various times in 1813 and 1814. During their occupation, the officers damaged furniture and the house, for which Allison sought £25 in compensation. British soldiers also appropriated or stole potatoes, hogs, shovels, an axe, and hay to feed horses. They also broke down fences for firewood and destroyed the orchard and beehives. Allison's claim listed four different British units as the perpetrators and attributed some losses to specific officers and staff, such as General Vincent, a Quartermaster of the 8th Regiment, and the baker for the Royal Regiment.¹⁶⁵ Many of the goods taken from Allison are not easily categorized as appropriated or looted, despite the distinction that later examiners might have sought. For Rebecca Allison and the other inhabitants of Niagara, the reason they were deprived of property and security mattered little because the end result was inevitably suffering.

Burning Niagara

Unquestionably, the most devastating destruction of personal property during the war was not looting or ransacking of supplies but the complete burning of towns and

¹⁶⁴ Abigail Anger, Claim No. 842. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3750, File 1, 1823.

¹⁶⁵ Rebecca Allison, Claim No. 181. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 1, 1823.

villages throughout Niagara. While military officers, civilians, and the press on both sides of the conflict denounced the burning of government buildings at York, no private homes were destroyed during the brief occupation. The first case of intentional burning of homes occurred in December 1813 at the town of Newark after a lengthy occupation. Harassed throughout the summer by the British and steadily losing men through desertion or completion of their militia service, McClure became desperate when he learned that the British were advancing from Burlington Heights toward Newark. Rather than face defeat or surrender, McClure decided to retreat across the river and ensure that the British were “shut out from any hopes or means of wintering in the vicinity of Fort George.” To accomplish his goal, he ordered that the fort and town should be burned: “The village of Newark is now in flames; the few remaining inhabitants in it having been notified of our intention were enabled to remove their property.”¹⁶⁶ Given only a few hours’ notice, the inhabitants of Newark grabbed whatever possessions they could from their homes and then stood in the snow watching the town burn around them.

Local historian Janet Carnochan’s *History of Niagara* contains a compilation of stories about the burning of Newark, filled with shocking and emotional scenes that capture only glimpses of the tragic moment. She includes the experience of Charlotte Dickson, who was carried from her home and “lay on the snow watching the destruction of the house” and Mrs. McKee who, “to save her little girl from standing in the snow while watching the conflagration, placed her on a large tea tray; but in spite of all, her

¹⁶⁶ General McClure to the Secretary of War, December 10, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF*, vol. 8, 263.

toes were partially frozen.”¹⁶⁷ Because few men were left in the town, having retreated with the British army or been imprisoned and sent to the U.S., many of the inhabitants put out of their homes were women and children. Some of their experiences were later described in war loss claims, appealing to the commissioners’ pathos. During the occupation, Elizabeth Campbell “took protection in [William Dickson’s] House with her Family,” possibly to help support Charlotte Dickson while her husband was in prison in Greenbush, New York.¹⁶⁸ Although Campbell moved some of her possessions to the Dickson’s, both houses were burned and nearly everything was lost. With nowhere to go, “she and her three young children without the possibility of saving their clothing, were exposed to the elements for three days.”¹⁶⁹

The burning of Newark and the Campbells’ subsequent exposure to winter conditions might also have played a part in the death of Elizabeth’s youngest child. The cause of death and name of the child are unknown, but according to Alexander Stewart, “after carrying [the infant] 4 miles for baptism [Campbell] had to dig its grave & cover its remains.”¹⁷⁰ Although the location of the burial plot is unknown, Campbell may have traveled to the house of Reverend Robert Addison, who lived three or four miles from Newark.¹⁷¹ If she knew that her child was close to death, she may have been desperate for the minister to baptize the baby before it died. Addison had baptized each of Campbell’s

¹⁶⁷ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 34.

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Campbell, Claim No. 174. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

¹⁶⁹ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 35.

¹⁷⁰ Alex Stewart to Alexander Wood, July 25, 1823, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/8F51DFA0-0CFA-4103-A64A-489815560330>.

¹⁷¹ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 117.

three other children, so she might have felt strongly that he should also tend to her baby's soul. Despite being left without shelter or provisions, Elizabeth Campbell set out on a difficult journey through the snow out of concern for her infant's well-being even into the next life.

Although the burning of Newark prompted shock and outrage from civilians and public officials on both sides of the conflict, it was a decision that had precedence in previous wars, at least in practical if not official warfare. During the American Revolution, both British and American soldiers and militia looted and burned the homes of confirmed or suspected enemy sympathizers. In addition to these back-country raids, "The burning of towns was a common tactic in warfare, often acknowledged as a military necessity, although this tactic tended to prompt criticism from the opposing side as a violation of the laws of war."¹⁷² Setting fire to entire cities or towns was meant to deny the enemy army both shelter and supplies if defense of the town proved untenable. The fires that destroyed Norfolk and New York in 1776 were justified as necessary to prevent the British army from garrisoning troops in the cities and conducting operations from a position backed by the British navy. At Norfolk, the fires were blamed on British commander Lord Dunmore, who had ordered selective burning of warehouses from which the Americans were firing on his ships. In truth, the fires set by the British were mostly extinguished before being reignited and spread by soldiers from Virginia with the implicit consent or at least silence from their commanding officers, who had already

¹⁷² Benjamin L. Carp, "The Night the Yankees Burned Broadway: The New York City Fire of 1776," *Early American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2006), 476.

determined that the city should be burned to prevent British occupation. Casting the British navy as the villains, "The burning of Norfolk became a Continental cause célèbre, as patriot leaders used the affair to turn the tide of sentiment against the British."¹⁷³

A similar deception surrounded the burning of New York later in 1776, with blame being shifted away from American sympathizers to suggest instead that the British or an accident had caused the destruction of 400-600 buildings, nearly a quarter of the city. As the British invasion force loomed, American military officers and politicians debated over the future of the city. Concerned that their position could not be defended, "The best American military minds knew it would be better to destroy New York."¹⁷⁴ Despite an official resolution in Congress that the city should not be burned, the fire that swept through on September 21 was likely the result of deliberate arson and sabotage of firefighting equipment. If a secret order to burn the city had been given, the Americans could never admit to it without inviting "public condemnation for having flouted the conventions of warfare."¹⁷⁵ While the practice of setting fire to public buildings and private homes was widespread and understood to be part of war in the eighteenth century, official responsibility for such acts was rarely claimed.

The decision to burn Newark took place in an entirely different context than Norfolk or New York but was also shaped by official policy that seemed to allow—at least to McClure—the abandonment of the accepted conventions of warfare that had

¹⁷³ Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 173.

¹⁷⁴ Carp, "The Night the Yankees Burned Broadway," 496.

¹⁷⁵ Carp, "The Night the Yankees Burned Broadway," 511.

caused so much concern and animosity during the Revolution. In correspondence about the defense of Fort George, Secretary of War Armstrong issued the following order:

Understanding that the defence of the post committed to your charge may render it proper to destroy the town of Newark, you are hereby directed to apprise its inhabitants of this circumstance and to invite them to remove themselves and their effects to some place of greater safety.¹⁷⁶

Unfortunately for the residents of Newark, McClure interpreted this order as justification for the burning of the town even though he was planning to abandon Fort George and retreat across the river to Fort Niagara. News of the event traveled quickly throughout the American and British lines. McClure defended his decision in private correspondence and to the public by claiming that he had authorization for the destruction of Newark. Armstrong was incensed that blame landed at his feet. “My orders were to burn it if necessary to the defence of Fort George, not otherwise,” he wrote, “Relieve this man.”¹⁷⁷ McClure’s admission that he had official orders to burn the town under any circumstances undermined the narrative of Americans behaving respectably in warfare. Unlike the burnings of Norfolk and New York, where the involvement of Americans was covered up or denied for decades, McClure exposed the contradiction between accepted conventions and necessary practice that lay just below the surface of warfare in the colonial era. His actions and subsequent arguments about responsibility opened a new chapter of the war in which fiery vengeance swept both sides of the Niagara River.

¹⁷⁶ The Secretary of War to the Commanding Officer at Fort George, October 4, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 7:193.

¹⁷⁷ The Secretary of War to Governor Tompkins, December 26, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:54.

The British commander Sir George Prevost was not satisfied with McClure's explanation of his decision nor Armstrong's qualification of his orders and decided that Newark must be avenged. His hope was that burning towns on the American side of the Niagara River would "teach the enemy to respect in future the laws of war."¹⁷⁸ Within days of the burning of Newark, the British army advanced, regained control of the Niagara District, and began planning their revenge. On December 19, British troops and native allies crossed the river and without a single casualty captured Fort Niagara, which they held until the end of the war. They also marched to the village of Lewiston, looting and burning public and private property alike. One officer described the campaign in a letter to a friend, writing, "We shall not stop until we have cleared the whole frontier. The Indians are retaliating for the conflagration of Newark. Not a house within my sight but is in flames. This is a melancholy but just retaliation."¹⁷⁹ The destruction of Lewiston, however, was not sufficient to appease the incensed British soldiers and native allies.

The American military, government, and public were aware that the burning of Newark had started a process that would inevitably bring similar destruction to their own side. New York Governor Tompkins wrote to McClure that if he had been told about the plan to burn Newark, he would have ordered out a larger force "to guard against the consequences of the irritation and disposition to retaliate which the burning of Newark would naturally excite on the west side of the Niagara river."¹⁸⁰ When Tompkins wrote that letter, his fears had already been confirmed by the capture of Fort Niagara and

¹⁷⁸ Sir George Prevost, "Proclamation," in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:115.

¹⁷⁹ "Handbill Printed at Montreal, 28th December, 1813," in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:16.

¹⁸⁰ Governor Tompkins to Brigadier-General McClure, December 24, 1813, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:42.

burning of Lewiston. One resident of the Niagara region in New York expressed similar concern that the British would continue to retaliate for McClure's "wanton and abominable act," which gave "a new aspect to the war, which will no doubt be carried on after this more to satiate the revengeful feelings of commanders and individuals than to obtain any great national benefit from it."¹⁸¹ Any positive views of the war based on the successful invasion of Niagara in 1813 were now replaced with shocked realization of how vulnerable the New York frontier was when the tide turned.

Throughout the final year of the war, inhabitants on both sides of the border suffered loss and displacement as the series of conflagrations continued to sweep across the region. In December 1813, British forces crossed the Niagara River to capture the villages of Buffalo and Black Rock. The officers had orders "to burn the town of Buffalo in retaliation for the burning of Newark."¹⁸² After driving the American defenders into retreat, the British set fire to over "334 buildings, including houses, barns, sheds, and stores worth an estimated \$350,000."¹⁸³ The British commanders considered this act of vengeance justified but also adequate to demonstrate the limits of acceptable warfare. Lieutenant-General Drummond reported to Prevost that he had issued orders to refrain from "further example in retaliation than what had already been inflicted so severely but so justly on the Niagara frontier."¹⁸⁴ Public opinion on both sides of the conflict made it

¹⁸¹ "Extract of a Letter to the Editor of the Pittsburg Gazette, from His Friend at Erie, Dated Erie, Dec. 21, 1813," *New-York Evening Post*, January 11, 1814, <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83030385/1814-01-11/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹⁸² "From 'A Statement of the Services of Major General Richard Say Armstrong, R.A.,'" in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:86.

¹⁸³ Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 103.

¹⁸⁴ Lieutenant-General Drummond to Sir George Prevost, January 17, 1814, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:129.

clear that the destruction of Newark, Lewiston, Buffalo, and Black Rock was unacceptable, and the British officers hoped that their retaliation would serve as a caution against further atrocities.

The problem with vengeance, however, is that neither side can unilaterally decide when justice has been fully served. After the British retreated, the American army returned to the frontier and began planning the next invasion. Drummond feared that while many American inhabitants were anxious for peace, about a third of them “declare their determination to cross again into Canada and burn and destroy everything within reach.”¹⁸⁵ His concern was warranted, as the internal conflicts in the American forces that had resulted in plundering and burning in 1813 were still present. While the American commander, Major-General Jacob Brown, issued orders that plundering and burning private property was unacceptable, he also had to contend with “the burning zeal of the volunteers” who wanted revenge for the destruction of villages in Niagara.¹⁸⁶ Raiding and foraging parties often carried out their own brand of justice in contradiction of Brown’s orders.

The inhabitants of Upper Canada, particularly those in the Niagara, London, and Western Districts, suffered the consequences of personal agendas and vengeance while rogue officers and soldiers faced few consequences. Amelia Ryerse was present when an American fleet landed at Port Dover on the shore of Lake Erie and proceeded from one settlement to the next, looting and burning every building they found. When the soldiers

¹⁸⁵ Lieutenant-General Drummond to Noah Freer, February 14, 1814, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 9:180.

¹⁸⁶ Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*, 385.

reached Ryerse Mills, Amelia and her mother watched their village burn: “Very soon we saw [a] column of dark smoke arise from every Building and what at early morn had been a prosperous homestead, at noon there remained only smouldering ruins.”¹⁸⁷ Another eyewitness reported that the unopposed force “destroyed altogether twenty dwelling houses, three flour mills, three saw mills, three distilleries, twelve barns and a number of other buildings.”¹⁸⁸ He also reported that the commander, Colonel John Campbell, justified his actions as retaliation for the burning of American villages. In a letter to a British officer, Campbell admitted, “What was done at that place and its vicinity proceeded from my orders. The whole business was planned by myself and executed upon my own responsibility.”¹⁸⁹ Major-General Brown ordered a court of enquiry into Campbell’s actions, which determined that he was justified in burning mills but erred in burning private property. Despite the court’s verdict, Campbell remained in the army and received no punishment for his actions.

After yet another invasion of the Niagara District in 1814, the inhabitants of Niagara showed even more resilience than during previous invasions, taking stands against the roving volunteer units that continued to ignore Brown’s orders about protecting private property. Major MacFarland of the 23rd U.S. Infantry wrote to his wife, “The whole population is against us; not a foraging party but is fired on, and not unfrequently returns with missing numbers.”¹⁹⁰ MacFarland recognized that the

¹⁸⁷ Amelia Harris, “Historical Memoranda,” in *Loyalist Narratives from Upper Canada*, ed. James John Talman (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969).

¹⁸⁸ Mathias Steele, deposition, May 31, 1814, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 1:16-17.

¹⁸⁹ Colonel Campbell to Major-General Riall, June 16, 1814, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 1:17.

¹⁹⁰ Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 1:73.

American militia volunteers were enraging the local population by plundering and burning indiscriminately. One British officer reported that the enemy “burnt the whole of the houses between Queenston and the Falls.”¹⁹¹ Across the entire district from Fort Erie to Queenston, inhabitants who had survived the invasion and occupation in 1813 were determined to resist further deprivations.

The conflict between inhabitants and invaders led to another scene of burning and destruction at the village of St. David’s near Queenston that would mark the end of the fiery campaign of vengeance. Hoping to find local militia who had been ambushing American supply lines, a troop of mounted volunteers rode to the village, engaged in a brief skirmish with the inhabitants, and then looted and burned 30 to 40 houses. Major David Secord, a resident of St. David’s, testified that the soldiers “said it was their avowed intention to burn, plunder, and destroy that Tory village.”¹⁹² Secord later provided sworn statements in support of claims for war losses submitted by Hannah Secord and Catherine Lowell, who both lost their homes and many other possessions to looting and burning. While both women would have to wait a decade for compensation of their losses, the American officer who led the attack, Colonel Isaac Stone, was merely discharged from the army for disobeying Brown’s orders. At St. David’s, like elsewhere, civilians suffered the consequences of looting and burning that swept the region on both sides of the border while the perpetrators went unpunished or unharmed.

¹⁹¹ General Riall to General Drummond, June 19, 1814, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 1:72.

¹⁹² “Extract from the Memorial of Major David Secord to the Assembly of Canada,” in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 1:72.

Mapping the War's Impact in Niagara

The relationship between battles, occupations, and experiences of loss and displacement are evident in spatial and temporal mapping of the Niagara District during the war. The project website includes an interactive map with an embedded timeline that illustrate these connections. Although traditional battle narratives mention the nearby settlements and towns affected by the fighting, they rarely focus on the individuals whose lives were disrupted and whose property was imperiled. Mapping battles, skirmishes, invasions, occupations, and contested areas alongside representations of losses recorded in the war loss claims of Niagara's inhabitants provides a unique perspective on how people experienced the war in the district. For instance, the map shows that the primary battles in the region were limited to seven specific locations. Fighting that occurred in populated areas such as Newark, Queenston, Lundy's Lane, Chippewa, and Fort Erie caused damage to local property and was sometimes followed by looting of houses. Yet a significant number of losses were experienced in areas of the district in which there were no major engagements, demonstrating the impact of raids and foraging in contested areas. Similarly, the geographic extent of American occupation in the district clearly correlates with the townships that experienced the highest rates of looting. This kind of mapping allows easy recognition of spatial patterns in the district that lend support to generally accepted but unexamined observations about the impact of war on the civilian population.

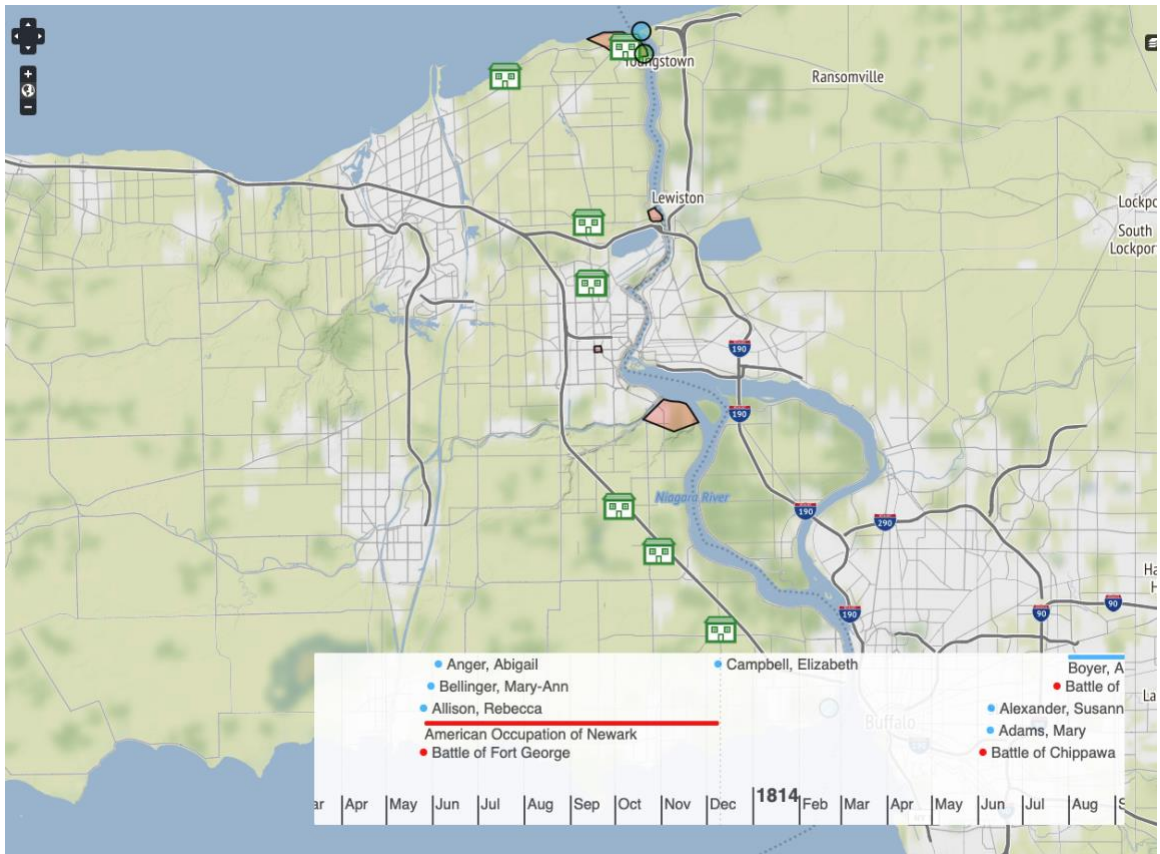


Figure 12 Map of major events of the War of 1812 and women's residences in the Niagara District [screenshot]

This is a screenshot of an interactive map of major events of the War of 1812 in the Niagara District and the approximate residences of women who submitted claims for losses incurred during the war. The [interactive map on the project website](#) allows users to manipulate the map and timeline, and to click each icon for more information.

Similarly, mapping events on a timeline shows how major battles and occupations correlate with inhabitant's experiences of loss. The interactive timeline on the project site includes time periods in which the British or American army controlled specific forts along the Niagara River. Although these facts are well-documented in written histories, mapping them alongside other events on the timeline shows how inhabitants in certain

areas experienced looting and burning in direct relation to the presence of friendly or enemy armies in the immediate vicinity. For example, the residents of Newark experienced looting and displacement when the American army invaded and took possession of Fort George in 1813. After the American occupation, the British regained control of Fort George and Fort Erie on the southern end of the river. For the next year, inhabitants in the district were free from looting (though some experienced appropriations by the British army). When the Americans invaded again to capture Fort Erie, the British withdrew to Fort George and left the district open to contest. For the next six months, residents were at risk of plunder and burning that had previously ravaged Newark, Lewiston, Buffalo, Black Rock, and Port Dover. The value of digital mapping technology is the ability to represent both spatial and temporal changes in relation to one another. The ability to map these interactions together improves our understanding of the inhabitants' experiences during the war.

Distress and Misery

The flames that consumed homes throughout Niagara were the consequence of multiple interacting factors that combined to bear down heavily on civilians living in contested or occupied territories. The initial plan by the Americans was a three-pronged attack on Upper Canada that quickly failed, putting much more pressure on the Niagara campaign as the only possible source of victory. Combined with internal conflict stemming from personal and political differences, that pressure caused American officers to make costly mistakes that sowed frustration throughout their force. Expectations of being received as liberators were dashed when American soldiers looted homes and farms

to augment their meager rations and overdue pay, turning potential allies into resentful resistors who suffered doubly from appropriations and looting by the British army. As the two armies advanced and retreated, they both scoured the land for resources, devastating the lives of civilians caught in the middle. In 1818, an address from the inhabitants of Upper Canada to the Prince Regent, George IV, presented a stark depiction of the circumstances of the war: “Wives and children had fled from their homes, the face of the country was laid to waste, and the fire of revenge was sent forth to consummate distress and misery.”¹⁹³ The goal of the address was royal intervention in the politics of Upper Canada to ensure compensation for the losses incurred during the war, which were substantial. In total, claimants estimated their losses at over £400,000 across the province, of which the inhabitants of Niagara accounted for more than half.

But the toll on the people of Upper Canada cannot be understood purely in quantitative data about their losses. While each item lost was assigned a discrete value, the articles stolen, killed, or burned also represented a part of someone’s life, whether a tool for daily activities, a family heirloom, a means of production, a source of food, a mark of class, or even just a small piece of comfort in frontier life. For many women of the district, deprivation of possessions and shelter was accompanied by temporary or permanent losses of family members, displacement from the communities in which they lived, and physical harm. A close examination of their experiences, however, reveals that women who suffered dramatic losses during the war did whatever necessary to survive, to

¹⁹³ *Principles and Proceedings of the Inhabitants of the District of Niagara for Addressing His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, Respecting Claims of Sufferers in War, Lands to Militiamen and the General Benefit of Upper Canada* (Niagara: Printed at the Niagara Spectator Office, 1818), 20.

preserve their families and communities, and to rebuild their lives out of the ashes that remained when their worlds burned down.

MODULE 3: “GREAT LOSSES AND MERITORIOUS EXERTIONS”¹⁹⁴

In the days following the burning of Newark, Elizabeth Campbell suffered the tragic loss of her youngest child. “After carrying [her child] 4 miles for baptism,” wrote a family friend, Campbell “had to dig its grave & cover its remains.”¹⁹⁵ Although the location of the burial plot is unknown, she may have traveled to the house of Reverend Robert Addison, who lived three or four miles from Newark and had baptized her other three children.¹⁹⁶ While Newark still smoldered, Campbell set out on a harsh journey in cold weather to ensure that her child could be considered part of a Christian family and church. From there, she and her surviving children started out on a long journey to Nova Scotia by way of York, Montreal, and Quebec. Like every woman who suffered losses in Niagara, Campbell faced a difficult choice between two daunting options: remain in the district and try to rebuild her life from the ashes or seek refuge in another place less severely impacted by the war. Whether they remained in the district or sought safety elsewhere, women coped with the destruction and displacement by taking on additional work, pooling and sharing resources, drawing on social and personal connections for support, and appealing to relief organizations for immediate aid. Their efforts were crucial to the survival of their families and preservation of their communities.

¹⁹⁴ From the description of Susannah McDonell’s experiences during the war in *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada* (Montreal: Printed by William Gray, 1817), 243.

¹⁹⁵ Alex Stewart to Alexander Wood, July 25, 1823, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/8F51DFA0-0CFA-4103-A64A-489815560330>.

¹⁹⁶ Janet Carnochan, *History of Niagara* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1914), 117.

Working and Leading

During the war in Niagara, women became heads of their households and sole providers for their families when male family members were killed in battle or by other causes, absent in service as regular soldiers or militia that required them to retreat with their respective units, or imprisoned as potential militia. With fathers, husbands, and older sons absent, women had to work harder to make up for the lost labor, take on additional responsibilities at home and in commercial activities, and in some cases even cooperate with occupying forces to ensure the survival of their families. Women living in the frontier society of Upper Canada played a significant role in household and public economies before the war but when placed under the additional pressure of invasions, plundering, and occupation without the support of male family members, the women of Niagara rose to the challenge of preserving their families and communities.

In the first months of the war, women's contribution to farm work in both Upper Canada and New York increased due to the higher number of male relatives being called to serve in the militia. Military commanders tried to balance defending the province with planting and harvesting necessary to feed both inhabitants and soldiers. Days after war was declared, officers in Niagara assigning leave to militia members were ordered to "give a preference to those whose presence on the farms are most required to bring in their harvest."¹⁹⁷ While the men were away, women on the farms tended to animals, planted seeds, and harvested crops, all in addition to cleaning and heating their homes, laundering and mending clothes, and feeding and raising their families. Recognizing that

¹⁹⁷ Militia General Orders, July 10, 1812, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3:120.

men serving in the militia were unable to tend to their farms, officers suggested that women take up the slack, with “encouragement being given for that purpose.”¹⁹⁸ This proposal demonstrates the officers’ own patriarchal views of women’s work and limited understanding of frontier farm life. Women who lived on farms were no strangers to the labor involved and had little need of encouragement to keep providing for their families even when the men were away.

While some women were fortunate to have additional help when their male family members were granted leave from the militia, other women who lost family members in battle or from other causes continued to maintain their homes and property even amid turmoil. Although records of women’s work during this period are scarce, evidence in the claim records submitted after the war demonstrates that women in both lower and upper social circles were compelled to take on new or expanded roles in the management of their families and farms. Ann Butler of Newark lost her husband, Thomas, when he died of disease in December 1812. At the age of fifty-one, Butler was suddenly solely responsible for managing and overseeing a substantial farm that included a barn, buildings for grain, two wagons, a carriage, a sleigh, cows, horses, sheep, and hogs. Her fields covered at least fifty-eight acres and were planted with hay, wheat, oats, peas, corn, and potatoes. For seven months, she continued to manage her household, care for her large family, and take responsibility for the farm, which in her case was likely less about doing manual labor than overseeing work done by others. As the wife of a prominent

¹⁹⁸ “Extract of a Letter from [blank] to Major General VanRensselaer,” September 16, 1812, in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 3:268.

Loyalist, Butler had at her disposal means and connections that made the burden of responsibility relatively lighter. She was also a daughter of the Ten Broeck family that had settled throughout the region and likely had the means to employ farm hands to work the fields and tend the animals. However, her management of the family estate was cut short in July 1813 when a battle between American-allied and British-allied native warriors led to her house and farm being burned, depriving Butler and her family of their home, resources, and livelihood. Women like Butler who had substantial resources at their disposal were better prepared to cope with the loss of fathers and sons but were still required to take on new responsibilities and labor to support their families.

Other women in the Niagara District were similarly burdened by the additional responsibilities of farming when their husbands died but had fewer connections and resources upon which to rely. In Grantham Township, Sophia Hainer and her six children—five aged 16 or younger—were left to tend to their farm without aid after Zachariah Hainer died of disease in early 1813. Within a year of her husband's death, Hainer was plundered by American soldiers, who took a firearm, bushels of oats and hay, and fence rails.¹⁹⁹ A neighbor, John McComb, signed a witness statement on her behalf, swearing that he was familiar with her farm and believed the values assessed to be accurate. It is possible that Hainer relied on nearby farmers like McComb for help with her land, but more likely depended on her own labor and that of her children to plant, tend, and harvest their crops. Elizabeth Skinner, another widow who suffered looting

¹⁹⁹ Sophia Hainer, Claim No. 264. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3744, File 1, 1823.

during the war, also relied on her son David to help cultivate her farm, which was damaged during the Battle of Lundy's Lane. In her claim for damages, he stated "that they had growing there three Bushels growing of Buck Wheat, & six acres or about of Corn, all of which was destroyed at the time of the battle, also two Bushels planted of Potatoes, which at and about that time were dug and destroyed by the Troops."²⁰⁰ While the battle was raging, Skinner abandoned her house along with Martha Cook, a relative who had been staying with her. Cook later stated that when they returned two days later, "the things were all taken away, the Garden destroyed and some of the windows taken out of the House."²⁰¹ By the time compensation for her losses was finally distributed in 1824, Skinner had already passed away and David was left to collect the partial payment of £9/13s on a claim approved for over £38 in damages. Like many women in Niagara, Skinner had little choice but to take on the additional responsibilities left when her husband died and do whatever she could to ensure the survival of her family. In the end, her efforts were successful, even if she did not live to see them come to fruition.

Staying and Working Together

Elizabeth Skinner's story includes an example of another important part of women's efforts that built on existing community connections to create living conditions more suitable for wartime survival. When faced with looting and destruction, women worked and sheltered together with other women in similar circumstances to combine and share resources. They also sought assistance from anyone left in the community who

²⁰⁰ Elizabeth Skinner, Claim No. 1037. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3751, File 1, 1823.

²⁰¹ Elizabeth Skinner, Claim No. 1037. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3751, File 1, 1823.

could help them preserve their property and families. At the outset of the Battle of Lundy's Lane, Martha Cook was with Skinner at her home, but they fled to avoid the violence. When the fighting was over, they returned to assess the extent of losses and damage. It is possible that Cook chose to stay with Skinner because she had previously suffered from looting despite her efforts to prevent it. According to her own war loss claim, Cook had transported several possessions to the home Elizabeth Lundy, perhaps hoping they would be safer there. Following the retreat of the British during the Battle of Chippewa, however, Lundy's home was plundered by "a number of American Indians" who took away "Bedding and Household furniture which had been deposited there for safety," along with several trunks, blankets, and a "large Looking Glass."²⁰² Elizabeth Lundy was present during the looting but admitted in her statement that she "did not notice the other articles that were taken" because she was "intimidated while the Indians were there."²⁰³ The threat of her own home being looted had caused Cook to trust in the security of her neighbors but when they too were plundered, she may have been desperate to find shelter and comfort wherever she could. Unfortunately, tragedy followed and Cook once more faced the threat of displacement and loss.

Women who lived with the constant threat of invasion and plundering, and who faced the additional work left behind by absent male family members, often chose to live together, combining and sharing their meager resources with one another to improve their chances of surviving the war. As mentioned in the previous module, Martha Rorbach left

²⁰² Martha Cook and Seth Cook, Claim No. 629. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3748, File 2, 1823.

²⁰³ Martha Cook and Seth Cook, Claim No. 629. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3748, File 2, 1823.

“her own House, being plundered of nearly all that was in it,” and because her husband was “absent with the Army, and Mr Alexander a prisoner she went to live with Mrs Alexander.”²⁰⁴ As a neighbor of the Alexanders, Rorbach was familiar with their home and business, mentioning that she witnessed their receipt of “a large assortment of Dry Goods and Groceries” that were later stolen along with household goods, clothing, bedding, and supplies.²⁰⁵ Staying together was a tactic that had potential to help both women preserve their homes and families, but even when they were unable to prevent looting they were still able to serve as witnesses for one another’s losses in later claims for compensation.

Women in Newark who joined their households together to share resources and support were not only at risk of looting but also suffered together when the town was burned in December 1813. During the occupation of the town, Elizabeth Campbell and her children moved into the home of Charlotte Dickson, whose husband William was imprisoned at Greenbush, New York. Campbell moved much of her property to the Dickson estates with the assistance of Benjamin Holmes, who was “personally present and assisted in moving the articles [that] were lodged in the Brick house of the Honble. William Dickson when it was burnt.”²⁰⁶ It is possible that the two women had a mutually agreeable arrangement in which the Dickson home provided a safer place to live for both families while Elizabeth helped Charlotte with the household and her health. According

²⁰⁴ Hugh and Susannah Alexander, Claim No. 548. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3747, File 3, 1823.

²⁰⁵ Hugh and Susannah Alexander, Claim No. 548. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3747, File 3, 1823.

²⁰⁶ Elizabeth Campbell, Claim No. 174. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

to local history, “when the town was burnt, [Charlotte] was ill in bed, and was carried out; she lay on the snow watching the destruction of the house.”²⁰⁷ If Charlotte Dickson had chronic health issues that limited her capacity to manage her household and care for her children, it is possible that Campbell offered to help in exchange for increased security for her family and property. Unfortunately, the potential benefits that compelled the two women to share resources and living quarters were lost when the burning of Newark forced them out into the cold December night.

Women in Niagara not only worked together to survive the losses and displacement they faced but also sought aid from anyone who remained in the district after so many others retreated with the army, were arrested and sent to prisons in the United States, or sought refuge in other districts. Benjamin Holmes, a servant employed by the Dicksons, was able to assist Elizabeth Campbell in moving her family into Charlotte’s home. Surviving records do not indicate why Holmes was allowed to stay in Newark while William Dickson, a merchant and lawyer with no military experience, was sent to prison. The imprisonment of men in Niagara was inconsistent and was likely driven in part by the personal grudges of Joseph Willcocks and his men. A similar situation affected Susannah Alexander, whose husband Hugh was imprisoned as an officer in the 3rd Lincoln Militia (named for Lincoln County in the Niagara District). When Alexander encountered Edward Hunt during her journey to seek refuge away from the fighting and plundering, she asked whether he would provide protection against looting if he remained in Stamford. Hunt may have been allowed to remain free because

²⁰⁷ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 34.

he was a farmer who could provide food for the occupying army, but he risked arrest if the enemy found out that he had served in the Loyalist militia during the Revolution. In the end, Hunt was unable to prevent the Alexanders' home and stores from being looted, but the incident suggests that women like Susannah Alexander were willing to seek and accept any available assistance in their attempt to survive and protect their property.

The close physical proximity of battlefields to civilian homes also led to circumstances in which some women witnessed intense battles, provided aid to soldiers, or even became involved in the fighting. Most of these stories are anecdotal but provide insight into situations that were prevalent throughout the district. The Battle of Fort George was the first major engagement in Niagara that took place in a populated area, bringing violence and death to the doorsteps of the civilian inhabitants. During the desperate British defense, Mrs. Henry "was very active in assisting the troops [...] giving them refreshments during the battle" and was described as "quite a heroine, not to be frightened."²⁰⁸ The Henry family lived at the lighthouse in Newark and an anecdote passed down by her daughter, Elizabeth Quade, shows how close they were to the action. Quade recalled that, "she and several other children were playing in a wheelbarrow near the lighthouse when a cannon ball struck about two feet from them. They then ran behind the lighthouse and in another moment another ball struck the wheelbarrow they had just left, smashing it to atoms."²⁰⁹ The Henrys were fortunate that the lighthouse was

²⁰⁸ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 299.

²⁰⁹ *Records of Niagara Historical Society*, vol. 11, 25 vols. (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1902), 11.

considered useful to both British and American vessels on Lake Ontario and was thus spared during the burning of Newark later that year.

The rapid advance of the American troops caused chaos and confusion throughout the British forces and civilians living in the area, including women who were concerned about relatives serving in the military and the safety of their own families. During the British retreat, Captain William Hamilton Merritt of the Niagara Light Dragoons

passed through by old Mr. Butler's, Ball's and Servos's. At those places the ladies and non-combatants of the town had retired, likewise all the wounded that could get away. It was really distressing to hear the cries of the women. I was stopped every few yards to satisfy their enquiries as to the safety of some husband, father, brother or son. The women had collected in groups in every public place through the country.²¹⁰

The retreat forced many Niagara militiamen to choose between taking the risk of returning to their homes in occupied areas—where they may have been paroled and allowed to stay or arrested and sent to prison—or to follow the army and leave their families to fend for themselves. Merritt observed, “Every other family in parting with their relatives gave them up for lost. This neighborhood retreated with the army almost to a man.”²¹¹ The women and children who remained had to cope with both the loss or departure of family members and the unknown circumstances that would result from enemy occupation. While the Americans held Fort George, numerous skirmishes occurred in the fields close enough to homes that “the ladies [looked] on from the windows.”²¹² In one engagement near Butler’s Farm, “John Lawe, a boy of thirteen

²¹⁰ “Notes by Captain W. H. Merritt” in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 5:261-262.

²¹¹ “Notes by Captain W. H. Merritt” in Cruikshank, *DHCNF* 5:262.

²¹² Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 35.

years,” was “Animated by a fierce passion for revenge” and “seized a musket when the firing began and joined the Indians. He continued to load and fire in the most fearless manner until the skirmish had nearly ended, when his mother appeared and forcibly removed him.”²¹³ Elizabeth Lawe had been caring for her family alone since her husband George had been wounded during the Battle of Fort George, then paroled to recovery at home, and finally imprisoned during McClure’s infamous roundup of potential militia. The concern for her son’s safety that drove Lawe to drag him from the battle was likely matched by her anger toward him at having risked his life while they were coping with so many other losses.

Living in contested territory meant women who supported the British were sometimes forced into physical action and harm’s way to help defend the district, even when local men refused to get involved. When Lieutenant James FitzGibbon of the 49th Regiment was scouting the village of Lundy’s Lane, Jane Kerby alerted him that the enemy occupied some nearby houses and encouraged him to leave. FitzGibbon ignored her advice and was caught in an unlikely situation. When two American soldiers tried to aim their muskets at him, he somehow managed to grasp each firearm and “held the weapons of both in such a position that neither of them could fire with effect.”²¹⁴ FitzGibbon called out to two men nearby for assistance, “but they would not interfere; poor Mrs. Kirby apparently distracted, used all her influence, but in vain.”²¹⁵ When one

²¹³ *Records of Niagara Historical Society*, vol. 3, 25 vols. (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1896), 37.

²¹⁴ E. A. Cruikshank, *The Fight in the Beechwoods: A Study of Canadian History* (Welland: W. T. Sawle and Co., Printers, 1895), 11.

²¹⁵ E. A. Cruikshank, ed., “The Quebec Gazette, Thursday, July 15, 1813.,” in *Records of Niagara*, vol. 44 (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1939), 51.

of the Americans realized that he could not free his musket, he “drew [FitzGibbon’s] sword out of its scabbard with his left hand,” but was unable to attack because another local woman, Sarah DeFields, “seized the uplifted arm and wrested the sword from his grasp.”²¹⁶ Eventually, an elderly man and young boy also entered the struggle and together the entire group managed to overwhelm the Americans and FitzGibbon made his escape with the two prisoners. No extant accounts report whether the Americans, who controlled much of the district, retaliated against the women and men who helped the British officer escape.

Living under enemy occupation also meant that some inhabitants of Niagara cooperated with the Americans, either because they sympathized with the invaders and considered them liberators or else because they had little choice to survive. Historian Alan Taylor writes, “Preferring profits to patriotism, many common people readily sold farm produce to the invaders.”²¹⁷ Profits may have motivated some farmers who had the option of selling their crops to the Americans, but other inhabitants were given few options when their usual means of supporting their families were lost. Little evidence survives of cases in which women cooperated with occupation forces, but this may be explained by the strong negative views of such behavior, which would have made many women reluctant to admit that they worked with the enemy to survive.

One surviving anecdote from the town of Newark, however, suggests that some women were forced to cooperate with the enemy to improve their family’s access to food

²¹⁶ Cruikshank, “The Quebec Gazette,” 51.

²¹⁷ Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 306.

and chances of survival. The story was passed down from Sarah Cassady's daughter Jane Whitten to her own daughter Sarah Catherine Follett who related the tale to local historian Janet Carnochan sometime in the late nineteenth century. On the day of the invasion of Newark, Sarah Cassady walked with her children to a local farm seeking refuge, her daughter Jane carrying her brother on her back. After sheltering in the barn overnight, Cassady returned to find her house "occupied by American officers. She had left bread, recently baked, in the home, and they offered to let her return on condition that she would bake for them, they supplying one hundred pounds of flour and she giving one hundred pounds of bread, and to have the additional loaves for herself."²¹⁸ According to Carnochan, Cassady continued to bake bread for the Americans throughout the summer and fed her children with the leftovers.

The oral tradition through which this story was passed down is likely the only way in which any mention of her cooperation with American soldiers could have survived. Other women living in Newark likely were aware of Cassady's actions but perhaps kept that information private to protect one of their own. When the British later retook the region, the risk of prosecution hung over any inhabitants who had helped the enemy, even if their motive was to avoid starvation. Knowledge of her cooperation with the Americans would also have jeopardized any chance of receiving aid from the LPS or recouping the losses for which Cassady and her husband claimed compensation after the war.²¹⁹ However, Sarah Cassady received a relief payment from the LPS for £6/5s and

²¹⁸ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 34.

²¹⁹ The Board of Claims for Losses rejected the claim of at least one woman, Lydia Smith, because her husband had joined the enemy. Lydia Smith, Claim No. 1471. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3755, File 1, 1823.

the board approved the Cassady's claim. The respective directors and commissioners of the two boards may have been unaware of Sarah's activities during the occupation. They may also have recognized that loyalty to the Crown was sometimes less important than immediate survival, even if the circumstances required temporary cooperation with the enemy. For Sarah Cassady, protecting her family required actions that could have had dire consequences and were better left unmentioned, especially in the years following the war, and meant that her willingness to put herself at risk went unremarked for decades.

Conversely, Laura Secord, one of the most famous people in Canadian memory of the war, earned a legacy as "the heroine of the War of 1812" through a dramatic journey that supported a simpler, loyalist memory of women's wartime contributions.²²⁰ Secord had already shown her courage during the Battle of Queenston Heights in October 1812, shepherding her children from her house in Queenston to safety and then returning to rescue her husband James who lay wounded on from the battlefield. In saving her children and husband, Secord was motivated by the same instincts of love and preservation that Sarah Cassady had felt but there was no reason to hide her actions. Many women who lived next to battlefields and whose husbands fought in the militia were forced to flee with their children and then search for their spouses among the dead. Secord's story may not have garnered much attention if not for her later journey that featured unique elements that could be memorialized into a portrait of courageous British loyalism and womanhood.

²²⁰ Ruth McKenzie, "Ingersoll, Laura (Secord)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ingersoll_laura_9E.html.

During the American occupation of Niagara from May to December 1813, the Secords' house in Queenston was a billet and mess for American officers in the area. In June 1813, James was recovering at home from wounds he received at the Battle of Queenston Heights eight months previously. Although the details remain contested, the Secords somehow learned about a surprise attack on the British camped at Beaver Dams being planned by Cyrenius Chapin, leader of a mounted company of volunteers from Buffalo with a reputation for plundering. The couple determined that someone must warn the British and the job fell to Laura as the only person around able to make the journey.²²¹ In a later recollection, Secord said that she hoped "to save the British troops from capture, or, perhaps, total destruction." Upon her arrival, she spoke with Lieutenant FitzGibbon, who later certified that Secord had delivered information "that the enemy intended to attempt by surprise to capture a detachment of the 49th regiment." He also noted that he was concerned she would suffer from "fatigue and anxiety, she having been exposed to danger from the enemy."²²² The warning she provided allowed the British and their native allies to set up an ambush and capture 462 American soldiers, including the infamous Dr. Chapin and his marauders. Laura Secord is by far the most recognizable woman in Canadian memory of the War of 1812 because her journey was immortalized in art, poetry, drama, and history.

²²¹ Peggy Dymond Leavey, *Laura Secord: Heroine of the War Of 1812* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2012), 85-89; Ruth McKenzie, "Ingersoll, Laura (Secord)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ingersoll_laura_9E.html.

²²² These three passages by Secord and FitzGibbon are taken from accounts presented as original material in a footnote in Gilbert Auchinleck's *The War of 1812: A History of the War Between Great Britain and the United States of America, During the Years 1812, 1813, and 1814* (Toronto: W.C. Chewett & Company, 1852), 175n.

Secord's involvement in this dramatic event was a result of her position as a woman and a loyal British subject. Her marriage to James, a United Empire Loyalist and militia officer, brought an increased sense of responsibility to protect British lives even if it meant putting her own at risk. The American officers living and dining in her home might not have discussed their plans openly in the presence of a British officer but perhaps they let down their guard around Laura, whose political views and loyalties they did not consider worth notice or caution. Her role as housekeeper and purveyor of food, which the Americans accepted without hesitation, certainly afforded ample opportunities to overhear plans and discussions. The roundabout route between Queenston and Beaver Dams that Secord chose to avoid American patrols, however, indicates she was aware that there were limits to how far a woman might go unnoticed in times of war. A woman serving meals and tending house might be little threat to military men discussing plans around a dinner table, but an unaccompanied woman traveling through a war zone with no excuse might not escape hard scrutiny at a checkpoint and severe consequences if identified as a spy. Secord's determination to save British lives was a result of her socio-cultural position. Her identity as a woman acting in a patriarchal, martial context provided her an unexpected opportunity to act on her convictions. She exploited men's blindness to her loyalties that resulted from her gender but was also careful to stay within the bounds of acceptable behavior by avoiding trickier points of conflict entirely. While Secord's individual story is unique among her contemporaries, the description of her "courage, endurance, and resolution in the face of adversity"²²³ might be applied to many

²²³ Ruth McKenzie, "Ingersoll, Laura (Secord)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of

of the women who skillfully navigated the difficult circumstances brought about by the war and their positions within that context.

Appealing for Aid

During and immediately following the war, women employed a variety of tactics when seeking recompense for lost property. Their efforts demonstrate a savvy awareness of their position within the patriarchal hierarchies of Upper Canada and how to best take advantage of the paternalism of aid organizations. Some of these efforts are found in the records of the Loyal and Patriotic Society (LPS). Founded in December 1812 by a group of wealthy, influential men in York, the aid organization “grew out of the peculiar circumstances of Upper Canada.”²²⁴ The LPS was initially intended to support the militia of the province, who were without proper clothing, equipment, or rations, but “it was soon discovered, that great distress must, unavoidably, in many cases, result to families, deprived of their sole support, the labour of fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers, employed in arms.”²²⁵ By raising money from subscribers and donors in Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, England, and even Jamaica, the LPS was able to distribute aid to inhabitants on a regular basis. The list of subscribers ranged in stature and commitment from the Bank of England’s £1000 donation to a few men who submitted only 10 shillings. Anyone with an annual subscription above one pound was considered a member of the society and was granted “the privilege of recommending objects to its

Toronto/Université Laval, 2003), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ingersoll_laura_9E.html.

²²⁴ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada* (Montreal: Printed by William Gray, 1817), 3.

²²⁵ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 3.

charitable bounty.”²²⁶ Subscribers donating over ten pounds annually were considered directors, were eligible to attend the quarterly board meetings, and were assigned to local committees for accepting petitions in different districts.

Women who were suffering from losses or struggling to survive learned of the LPS and made petitions either themselves or through intermediaries. One of the first cases reviewed was Hannah Smith’s, whose husband had been killed in action and who was ill at the time she applied. Her petition was approved and she was ordered an immediate relief payment of £2/10s. Unfortunately, by the time the draft was prepared and the payment made, Smith had died from her illness, so her payment of ten shillings per week was given “to the person who has the charge of her children.”²²⁷ During their tenure, the LPS directors reviewed over 815 claims of which 368 (45%) were submitted on behalf of or by women seeking immediate relief or compensation for losses.

Because the surviving record of LPS activities is a report prepared from the notes of its meetings, the precise methods that women used to apply for aid are not clear. In most cases, the record simply states that the society resolved to pay a certain amount to a person due to their unfortunate situation, with some details usually provided. The closest description of the process is the appointment of committees in each district “who may apply to the relief of cases of distress arising therein.”²²⁸ Exactly how those committees solicited or collected information about these cases is unclear. After the Battle of York, Mrs. Dettor and Mrs. Murray were both given twenty-five pounds, split into two

²²⁶ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 12.

²²⁷ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 25.

²²⁸ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 13.

payments over two years, because their husbands were both killed during the battle.²²⁹ Perhaps the two women approached the committee directly to plead their cases, or perhaps their circumstances were already known to members who then applied on their behalf. In some cases, representatives from different districts or settlements appeared before the directors and petitioned for funds they could distribute to worthy and needy inhabitants. Colonel Talbot, for example, received £750 “for the relief of the inhabitants of Port Talbot [...] who were plundered by the troops of the United States.”²³⁰ He also received payments for other sufferers in Norfolk District. Talbot provided lists of the people to whom he distributed aid, which included several widowed women. In these cases, such women were supported by the LPS without having to make their own petition and may not have known about the organization before receiving aid.

In other cases, the minutes refer to petitions submitted by individuals, suggesting that inhabitants had several different methods of seeking aid from the society. In April 1816, Ruth Marks and Betsey Johnson traveled from the Western District to York to collect pensions—likely awarded to them as widows—but due to “some difficulty preventing them, they were unable to get home” and were provided immediate payments of £10 each to help them return.²³¹ Ruth Marks was a particularly persistent and ambitious petitioner: after receiving the standard £20 given to widows in May 1815, she then returned in December of the same year and “the Society not recollecting that she had already received twenty pounds, voted her that sum, by which she obtained double what

²²⁹ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 43.

²³⁰ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 263.

²³¹ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 257.

the widows got.”²³² Marks successfully received aid in each of her three journeys from the Western District to York, first by exploiting the directors’ lack of attention to details and then by appealing to their paternalistic support for travelers. Her negotiation of the bureaucracy does not suggest that the LPS was opposed to helping people and needed to be scammed but demonstrates the various approaches and appeals women could use to receive aid from the LPS, even if they were not strictly following the rules.

Although inhabitants of Niagara received few disbursements from the LPS in the first few years of its activities, the losses they incurred during the campaigns of 1813 and 1814 were so substantial that they eventually submitted more claims than any other district. Following the major battles throughout Niagara in 1813, the LPS was inundated with petitions from women whose husbands were either killed in action or imprisoned, leaving them and their children with few resources. During a meeting in February 1814, the society approved payments to Hannah Fry, Elizabeth Lawe, Mrs. Heward, Sarah Lawrence, Elizabeth McLelan, Eliza Wright, Phoebe Cameron, and Mary Grass, all residents of Niagara. These eight women were approved for £510 of aid between them but because the LPS report is compiled in different sections that do not correspond very well, it is difficult to determine whether they all received the monies awarded to them.²³³ Inhabitants of Niagara accounted for over nearly half of all claims made to the LPS and of those claims, 69% were submitted by or on behalf of women living in the district.²³⁴ The report includes some details of successful petitions, which provide insights into the

²³² *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 249.

²³³ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 101.

²³⁴ Jennifer Michelle Legare, “From the Ashes: The Niagara District in the War of 1812” (M.A. Thesis, Guelph, University of Guelph, 2003), 36, 50.

variety of circumstances with which women had to cope during the war. Isabella Hill, “a lady of cultivated understanding and agreeable manners, having seen much of the world,” was given £50 to help her reach Jamaica. Hill had owned two houses in Newark and had continued to live there with her daughter during the American occupation in 1813 but abandoned her property when she learned that they planned to set fire to the town. While residing in York and determining what next to do, she applied for aid from the LPS, which often provided funds for sufferers traveling away toward refuge or returning to their former homes.²³⁵ Hill’s petition is one of the more detailed but many more were quite brief and opaque. Susannah McDonell of Niagara District was awarded £40 “on account of her great losses and meritorious exertions.”²³⁶ The report provides no explanation of the losses that McDonell experienced nor the exertions that earned the directors’ recognition. It is clear, however, that the directors of the LPS were assessing petitioners’ needs but also their worthiness.

Although the basic measures of need were similar for both women and men, worthiness was described (and likely defined) differently for female and male sufferers. Many women’s cases included descriptions of their male husbands, sons, or fathers.²³⁷ The death, imprisonment, or disability of these men was often attributed as the cause of women’s suffering and justification for relief. When Abraham Aker died in November 1812, his mother Elizabeth Aker and his daughter, also Elizabeth, were both left without

²³⁵ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 240-241.

²³⁶ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 243.

²³⁷ The report uses relational terms inconsistently: women whose husbands had died might be listed under their full name, “Mrs,” or “Widow.” Lack of information about given names might explain some of this inconsistency but there is no explanation why only some widows were described with that term.

means of support and received aid from the society.²³⁸ Conversely, the rationale for male petitioners often mentioned a wife and number of children as dependents that justified receiving aid. The underlying assumption was that women could receive aid when they had no male relative to provide for them, while men could receive aid for themselves or to provide for women and children. In a reflection of the hierarchy of family in the early nineteenth century, there were no cases of women applying for aid who had able husbands at home. Similarly, there were no cases in which relief was justified by the death of a woman, except when petitioners were orphaned by the death of both parents.

Despite the difference in determining and describing the worthiness of women and men, the language used by the directors indicates that their decisions were focused primarily on one criterion: was the petitioner in dire need of relief? This basic measure applied across lines of gender, race, and class. Descriptions of cases submitted by black and white women and men of elite and lower social standings all reference circumstances such as poverty, disability, and support of their families as justification for relief. Judith Knox was given £5/5d because she was “poor and distressed.” The same reasons were given for David Wills and Henry Frank, who both received £2/10d.²³⁹ The assessment of need was also applied equally across lines of race. By this era in Upper Canada, “free Blacks exercised the rights of full (albeit socially second-class) citizens.”²⁴⁰ The directors of the LPS made no note about race when assessing the petition of Peter Lee who while serving in the Coloured Corps of the 1st Lincoln Militia, “Hurt his arm in the king’s

²³⁸ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 300.

²³⁹ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 280.

²⁴⁰ Gareth Newfield, “Upper Canada’s Black Defenders? Re-Evaluating the War of 1812 Coloured Corps,” *Canadian Military History* 18, no. 3 (2009): 32.

works, which is disabled, has seven children in great distress.”²⁴¹ Nor did they comment on the race of Catherine Waters, whose husband served alongside Lee and who “was robbed and driven from the farm her husband rented.”²⁴²

The prominence of some petitioners within Upper Canadian society meant that their circumstances received more attention but did not necessarily entail that they would receive additional aid. Isabella Hill may have earned a lengthy and flattering account in the report due to her position as the widow of a respected military officer but she received no more aid than Therese McKee, who was simply “on her return to Amherstburg.”²⁴³ Taking advantage of the opportunity present in the society’s criteria for assessing need and awarding relief, white and black women may have recognized that emphasizing their need and distress was the most effective way to persuade the directors to grant payments that would allow them to survive and support their families. The blunt language of poverty and disability may have been intentionally crafted by women who were aware that men perceived them as vulnerable but could use that position to ensure personal and familial survival.

Living through War

When the women of Upper Canada experienced looting and burning during the war, they responded with determination to ensure the survival of themselves, their families, and their communities. Women with farms took over the labor of men in

²⁴¹ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 300-301. The Lincoln Militias were named for Lincoln County, which included seven townships along Lake Ontario from the Niagara River to 40 Mile Creek.

²⁴² *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 300-301; 274-275.

²⁴³ *The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada*, 236. Both women did receive more aid than average, perhaps due to the length of their expected journeys.

addition to their own substantial workload, managed the activities around the farm, and continued to provide for their families. When the threat of looting or violence was high, they merged households and shared responsibilities with other women who were similarly affected by the absence of male relatives and threat of looting. Women also requested aid from anyone who seemed able to help them preserve their homes and possessions. In some cases, they even cooperated with the enemy if it meant that their children would not starve. In other events, women helped the British military through direct intervention in conflict or by providing information that saved lives. Throughout the war, women balanced survival against loyalty, shaping the narrative of their activities to highlight their courage and obscure actions that might be turned against them. When opportunities arose to seek aid from charitable organizations like the Loyal and Patriotic Society, women suffering from loss of income, looting, and burning appealed for any support that would help them survive. Aware of their position in the social hierarchy, they emphasized their dire need and demonstrated their worthiness for aid, taking whatever advantage they could from the narrative in which the poor suffering woman seeks alms from a benevolent committee of generous men.

MODULE 4: “A STATEMENT OF LOSSES SUSTAINED”

While the war raged in the Niagara District, Elizabeth Campbell and her three surviving children undertook an arduous winter to seek refuge at York. They arrived in York by February 1814, where Campbell received £50 in aid from the Loyal and Patriotic Society to address her immediate concern of survival while she determined her next steps. During her time in York, Campbell took action to seek compensation for the loss of her house and property in Newark. With the help of William Allan, who would later serve on the Board of Claims for Losses in 1823, Campbell prepared a petition to Lieutenant-Governor Gordon Drummond, requesting that he “perceive the extent of her misfortune, and afford her, if possible, some remuneration.”²⁴⁴ Like many Upper Canadians, Campbell hoped that the government would provide some restitution for her losses and addressed her petition to the highest authority in the province. In this act, Campbell was following a well-established pattern in colonial British North America in which subjects exercised their right to petition the Crown or its representative. The high population of Loyalists in Upper Canada meant “that the correct and acceptable form of the petition was soon widely known and almost invariably used.”²⁴⁵ Campbell’s petition took the acceptable form and included a statement by Reverend Robert Addison, William Claus, and Thomas Dickson in support of the facts of her losses. Unfortunately, Drummond replied that it was not in his “power to grant her the remuneration she

²⁴⁴ Elizabeth Campbell, Claim No. 174. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

²⁴⁵ J. K. Johnson, “‘Claims of Equity and Justice’: Petitions and Petitioners in Upper Canada 1815-1840,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 28, no. 55 (1995): 221.

desired.”²⁴⁶ This denial may have prompted Campbell to use her dwindling resources and temporary aid from the LPS to fund her journey to Nova Scotia, where she could rely on the support of her extended family. Thousands of Upper Canadians sought remuneration for losses incurred during the war but were forced to wait over a decade before the government reviewed their cases and issued compensation.

Claims Process and Criteria

During and immediately following the war, the Loyal and Patriotic Society (LPS) was the only source from which the inhabitants of Upper Canada could receive relief for the dire circumstances caused by extensive looting and burning. Beginning in 1813, however, commissions appointed to investigate claims on the army commissariat suggested to inhabitants that there may exist an opportunity to seek compensation for the property and homes they had lost. In 1813, a board of militia officers convened at Niagara to investigate claims against the army commissariat for goods and services provided to the military, but most of their records were lost when the Americans captured, occupied, and then burned the town of Newark.²⁴⁷ A second commission in 1815 established boards of accounts in six locations throughout the province to review similar claims. Individual committees composed of militia officers met in each district and reviewed about 1,254 claims from inhabitants across the province.²⁴⁸ In creating

²⁴⁶ Campbell, Claim No. 174.

²⁴⁷ Thomas Clarke to Sir Peregrine Maitland, March 6, 1820. Library and Archives Canada, MG11 CO42 ‘Q’ Series Vol. 328: 49-51. https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c10764

²⁴⁸ This figure is compiled from the lists provided by the individual boards assembled at Fort Wellington, York, Kingston, and in the Western, Niagara, and London Districts. See *Military Board of Claims, Proceedings and Abstracts of Claims* [Various]. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3768, 1813-1816.

these first boards, the British military was attempting to review and pay debts it had incurred during the war through appropriations and unpaid contracts.

The militia officers quickly realized, however, that many inhabitants were seeking compensation for property and articles taken or destroyed by British and American soldiers and native warriors during the war. They summarily rejected these kinds of claims as outside their mandate. Perhaps recalling that the British government provided compensation to Loyalists following the Revolution, the inhabitants of Upper Canada refused to accept rejection and demanded a broader investigation that would cover a wider range of losses. Letters like the one sent by Elizabeth Campbell put pressure on the provincial administrators, who were unsure how to respond to overwhelming requests for aid. In 1815, Lieutenant-Governor Francis Gore wrote to the Earl Bathurst that he had “received information that considerable depredations have been committed by the Enemy, and also by our own Army, and the Indians, in Upper Canada.”²⁴⁹ He asked for instructions about how to handle “applications from the sufferers.” Bathurst replied that a new committee should be appointed to accomplish the investigation and return its report for consideration by the government. This third board of commissioners solicited and reviewed 2,884 claims covering losses of personal articles, animals, crops, wagons, fences, houses, barns, stables, and outbuildings. Inhabitants of Upper Canada who had suffered personal losses during the war had reason to hope that they would be compensated within a reasonable timeframe.

²⁴⁹ Lt. Governor Francis Gore to Earl Bathurst, May 18, 1815, LAC, CO42/319, 96.

Controversy arose, however, when inhabitants and government officials in Upper Canada and England criticized the 1815 commissioners for assuming “monstrous and impeachable power”²⁵⁰ by establishing principles of operation that would result in unfair discrimination against claimants. Among the thirteen principles were some that stated the board would reject the claims of “persons notoriously disaffected” (often taken to mean disloyal or just contrarian in some way), would strike out any article for which the value had been “grossly exaggerated,” and that “trifling losses not materially affecting the individuals be rejected.”²⁵¹ Critics argued that these restrictions and definitions were subjective and would open the process to discrimination and abuse. These policies were so heavily criticized that a fourth and final commission, called the Board of Claims for Losses (BCL), was appointed in 1823 to review all previously submitted claims and to solicit claims from inhabitants who had not already applied.

The complex and contested history of these various boards caused the 1823 commission to adopt a more robust structure and stricter procedures than previous boards. The members of the commission included William Allan, Joseph Wells, Colby Lyons Lucas Foster, Thomas Ridout, and Augustus Baldwin, with J.B. Macauley serving as secretary of the board and Lewis Bright as the official messenger. The board met on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays of each week in the house of Duncan Cameron in York. The commissioners advertised in three provincial newspapers that inhabitants could submit claims to the secretary that included the following components: a claim

²⁵⁰ John Galt to R. Wilmot, December 12, 1822. LAC, CO42/332, 150.

²⁵¹ John Galt to R. Wilmot, December 12, 1822. LAC, CO42/332, 153.

sworn to before a Justice of the Peace, an affidavit from “at least one indifferent Person,” and “such documents (duly proved) as may be necessary to Substantiate the Same.”²⁵² If the submitted documents did not meet the burden of proof, the commissioners also expected that claimants and their witnesses would appear before them at York to provide further evidence or testimony.

These strict procedures set a high threshold for submitting claims to the board. A claimant was required to prepare a claim in the proper form, including a list of all articles taken or destroyed along with values, and swear before a justice of the peace that the claim was true and properly valued. Preparing such a list required a good memory and a method for assessing typical values for each item. To support their valuations, many claimants relied on expert witnesses, such as carpenters who could say that the value of a specific house was accurately represented. Producing such documents required literacy or sufficient funds and connections to employ a representative to prepare a claim. Once over that initial hurdle, claimants were then required to identify witnesses or supporters for their claims and have those persons make a statement under oath. With the paperwork assembled, sworn, and submitted, the claimants then waited to hear whether the commissioners would accept the evidence and allow an award. If the board required further evidence, the process of finding and preparing evidence began once more. The exacting procedures and investment of time and resources required to make a claim made

²⁵² *Board of Commissioners: Journal of Proceedings, 1823-25*. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3729, File 2, 1825, 4.

the process accessible to only a limited number of inhabitants of Upper Canada so that not all who suffered losses during the war could seek compensation.

In particular, native men and women living within Upper Canada were not eligible to apply for compensation, even though they undoubtedly experienced material losses during the war. Unfortunately, the wartime experiences of native communities in Upper Canada have received almost no attention in histories of the war or the province. The ever-shifting relationship between the Crown and native tribes in Upper Canada was a mutual alliance (though increasingly unbalanced in favor of the British) that did not compel the Crown to take responsibility for losses incurred by native men and women who had supported the war effort. In the post-war years, the official British policy considered continued efforts to maintain good relationships with native allies “largely unnecessary and even irrelevant.”²⁵³ In a token gesture that hardly compensated the native tribes for their sacrifices, William Claus, an Indian Department official, “distributed £2,300 worth of presents to the Indian allies as a gesture of gratitude by the king for the military assistance of the tribes during the late war.”²⁵⁴

The three native people who are represented in claims made to the various boards that reviewed wartime losses were exceptions to the general exclusion of native people from the claims process. In 1819, a Mohawk war chief named Henry A. Hill sought payment for the use of his team of oxen that the British army pressed into service during the war. Hill’s early claim was not resubmitted to the BCL in 1823, however, and his

²⁵³ Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty’s Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), 173.

²⁵⁴ Allen, *His Majesty’s Indian Allies*, 174.

name does not appear in the vouchers or paylists. Only a single successful claim represented the losses of a native person, who likely benefited from her status within white society to gain access to the claims process. Ohtowa'kéhson (also known as Catherine Brant) was head of the turtle clan of the Mohawks and third wife of Thayendanegea (also known as Joseph Brant). Joseph had who fought alongside the British in the Seven Years' War and the Revolution before visiting England to petition the Crown for compensation of losses incurred during the war and secure British support in any future conflicts between the Six Nations and the United States.²⁵⁵ Before his death in 1807, Joseph established the Mohawk settlement at Grand River near present-day Brantford, where Catherine lived during the War of 1812.

In 1816, Brant submitted a claim for destroyed fence rails and crops, animals that were killed, and damages done to her house and barn. For evidence, she relied on witness statements from her youngest son John, Michael and Henry Groat (both black men), and Augustus Bates (a white man).²⁵⁶ Although Brant was still living in 1823, her claim was resubmitted by John Brant, who referred the board to the previous claim. The voucher and other registers both list John and Catherine Brant as payees, making it difficult to determine whether Catherine retained control of the compensation payments. She may have relied on John to administer the claim while keeping authority over how the money was used or perhaps allowed him to use her name to collect payment for his own use. In

²⁵⁵ Isabel T. Kelsay, "Ohtowa'kéhson," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1988), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ohowakehson_7E.html. Joseph Brant was successful in his financial petition, "securing his pension and £15,000 for the Mohawk people." Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 65-66.

²⁵⁶ Brant's reliance on black men to support her claim is notably, as no other non-black women appear to have relied on black witnesses. See the section on Community Support for more on this topic.

either case, Brant's successful claim for compensation is the sole exception to the rule that the British government did not recognize or compensate the wartime losses of native people in Upper Canada. The explanation for Brant's access to the claims policy is a result of her prominence in the Mohawk community and status within white society. Through her husband's reputation and her own role as a native leader, Brant occupied a position in elite society in Upper Canada, earning her respect and consideration that were not available to most native people. While the commissioners would have clearly recognized that Brant was not white, they would also have seen that making an exception in this case was not only reasonable but important to maintaining good relations with the Mohawk community.

Black inhabitants of Upper Canada were similarly underrepresented in the claims process but were not explicitly excluded based on their race. During the War of 1812, the black population in Upper Canada was still relatively small, comprising mostly free persons and some enslaved persons. Although slavery was legal in the province until the 1830s, by 1812 free black people outnumbered the enslaved population. A 1793 act had prohibited importing new enslaved persons, abolished the enslavement of black persons arriving in the province, and set in place mechanisms ensuring that the children of enslaved persons would be freed, and their grandchildren born free.²⁵⁷ As legal subjects

²⁵⁷ Enslaved persons already in the province were not freed by this act, but many were subsequently manumitted in the years that followed. See Wayne Edward Kelly, "Race and Segregation in the Upper Canada Militia," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 78, no. 316 (2000): 264–77; and Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New York: The New Press, 2017).

of the Crown, “whether free born, manumitted, or escaped, the black residents [of Upper Canada] assumed the rights and the responsibilities of full citizens.”²⁵⁸

The language appearing in the claims suggest that white inhabitants of Upper Canada perceived an important distinction between themselves and black inhabitants, even though the law and the board of commissioners did not. At least six black men and one black woman submitted claims for compensation after the war. Three of the men, John Smith, Peter Lee, and Robert Jupiter, were from Niagara Township. Michael Groat was from Grand River and Edward Page lived in Malden Township of the Western District. The sole black female claimant, Sarah Long, lived in York. All the black claimants’ documents were prepared by white men, many of whom added descriptors such as “a man of Colour,” “a Black woman,” or “a Black man” next to the names of the claimants or witnesses. Yet like the directors of the LPS, the commissioners of the BCL (or at least their secretary Macauley) recorded no official comments about claimants’ perceived race in their proceedings and seem to have assessed claims made by black persons without prejudice. If claims included the required evidence, the only potential for discrimination was in the commissioners’ valuation of the losses compared to the valuation provided by the claimants. According to the commissioners’ report on the 1,874 claims they had decided, awards were on average 53% lower than the values submitted.²⁵⁹ The value of awards for black claimants were on average 32% lower than

²⁵⁸ Michael Power and Nancy Butler, *Slavery and Freedom in Niagara* (Niagara-on-the-Lake: Niagara Historical Society, 1993), 44.

²⁵⁹ £193,038 total awarded divided by £407,026 total claimed equals 47.4%. *Report of Commissioners*. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3729, File 9 (York, Upper Canada: Printed by J. Carey, 1823), 8.

the amounts they claimed. Additionally, while all claimants received payment of only 35% on their awards, black men and women received payments at the same rate. These figures indicate that while black inhabitants may have had less access to the claims process due to the strict procedures and requirements for evidence, the board of commissioners did not discriminate based on race in the assessment and payment of claims.

War Loss Claims and Gender

In addition to the restrictive procedures and evidentiary requirements of the board, other factors contributed to limit women's access to the claims process. The decade that passed between period of loss and review of claims likely reduced the number of women claimants who may have moved beyond the reach of the advertisements soliciting claims, remarried and were comfortable enough to neglect to submit a claim, or had passed away. For many inhabitants, even learning about the call for new claims was not guaranteed. In their final report, the commissioners claimed "that they did not fail to adopt every means which occurred to them of giving general information of their days of meeting" in the form of "public newspapers as well as printed handbills circulated throughout the Province." Considering these efforts sufficient, the commissioners argued that any outstanding claims were "wholly owing to the neglect of the claimants themselves."²⁶⁰ Even if women who suffered losses during the war had survived long enough, were head of their household, and heard about the commission, they had still to overcome the final

²⁶⁰ *Report of Commissioners*, 6-7.

hurdle of providing sufficiently detailed lists of articles lost and evidence to support their claim.

Evidence from women who did not submit claims is difficult to find but the women who successfully made claims offer clues to the changes in situation that may have disqualified others who were less fortunate. Isabella Hill had received support from the LPS for a journey to Jamaica and submitted a claim in 1815 to compensate for the losses of her houses, a stable, bricks, and fruit trees. By 1823, Hill was not in Jamaica but was instead residing in England. Despite her removal from the province and the distance involved, she employed James FitzGibbon as her agent in Upper Canada and he administered her submission to the Board. Her renewed claim relied on the previously submitted documents, which included a statement of support from two carpenters from Newark attesting to the value of the buildings lost.²⁶¹ FitzGibbon also sought out an additional witness, John Eggleston, who made a general statement verifying the account and articles lost. As a result of satisfactory proof, the Board awarded £346 for the claim, which had been estimated at £628/5s.²⁶² Isabella Hill leveraged social connections and respectability to follow through on her claim, which may have also required some financial investment to employ FitzGibbon to work on her behalf. These kinds of resources were beyond the means of many inhabitants of Upper Canada who suffered

²⁶¹ Many of the claims submitted to the Board in 1823 were simply rewritten versions of earlier claims submitted in 1815, often with the original claims included when the applicant had kept a copy. Other early applicants who had not kept copies of their 1815 submissions often requested that the commissioners refer to their original claim for the details of their losses.

²⁶² Isabella Hill, Claim No. 1424. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3754, File 3, 1823.

losses during the war, especially widowed women who were struggling to provide for their families while recovering from substantial losses.

Comparison of women's representation in the records of the Loyal and Patriotic Society (LPS) and the Board of Claims for Losses (BCL) indicates that women in Upper Canada were significantly more likely to receive relief for their immediate situations than to submit a claim for compensation from the government. Women account for approximately 45% of relief payments by the LPS but only 8.1% of the claims reviewed by the BCL. The explanation for this difference is that the private society provided aid to relieve immediate distress, while the government board investigated and reimbursed the loss of existing property. The mission and criteria of the LPS not only acknowledged that women were often in severe need but also encouraged them to apply by setting a standard amount for widows and recognizing that women in households where male family members had been killed or disabled often needed additional support. While the directors sometimes recorded comments on petitioners' loyalty, level of distress, and other sources of support, many payments were made simply to provide for the present survival of the sufferers by helping them reach their homes, feed their children, or travel to safer places. The basic criterion of need opened eligibility to a much wider range of inhabitants, especially women, because the LPS was not concerned with marital status or property rights in determining whether to provide relief.

The work of the BCL, however, was driven primarily by concerns about property ownership, which excluded many women in Upper Canada who had suffered during the war. Tasked with investigating and compensating inhabitants for property taken or

destroyed, the commissioners required that claimants prove they owned the articles listed in the claim. Demonstration of ownership was not an option for married women due to coverture, an element of British common-law entailing “the absorption of a married woman's property into her husband's control during the life of their marriage.”²⁶³ Only one married woman submitted a claim to the board, listed with her husband as co-claimants. In 1816, John and Lydia Evans submitted a claim for clothing taken by British soldiers and “Fences, Fixtures, and Furniture destroyed by the Garrison troops.”²⁶⁴ John and Lydia both signed the sworn statement, which used the collective noun “we” to describe the property lost. When reapplying to the board in 1825, John alone signed the statement referring the commissioners to the previous documents. We can only speculate why the Evans’s initial claim included Lydia as co-claimant, but its uniqueness indicates that married women’s losses were almost always represented by their husbands.

²⁶³ Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 9.

²⁶⁴ Lydia Evans and John Evans, Claim No. 76. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3741, File 2, 1823.

John Evans of the Township and City of York, Abolition, and Lydia, his Wife, Humbly
 begs leave to lay the following Statement of their Claim for a Remuneration of Losses which they have actually
 sustained by His Majesty's Troops during Hostilities, to the consideration of the Honorable the Commissioners
 appointed by His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor now present

£ 00	To a quantity of Hay and their Children's Clothing feloniously taken by a Detachment of the Eight or Kings Regiment and others, estimated at	£ 60-0-0
50-0-0	To Fences, Fences and Furniture destroyed by the Garrison Troops	£ 50-0-0
£ 57-0-0		£ 110-0-0

Amounting to One hundred and ten pounds Sterling for Currency dollars at 5/-

I John Evans of the Township and City of York, Abolition, and Lydia my Wife, do hereby solemnly
 declare, that we have actually sustained the damages in the above Claim set forth, and that we have not received any
 remuneration, whatever either from His Majesty's Government from the individuals who committed the damage claimed
 for, or from any other Person or persons for them

Witness our Hands } John Evans
 Lydia Evans

York 18th January 1816

Figure 13 Lydia Evans and John Evans, Claim No. 76. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3741, File 2, 1823.

Because married women generally did not submit claims to the board, claims linked to female inhabitants fall into one of two categories: claims submitted by widows and claims inherited by widows of deceased claimants. Women who were widowed before or during the war submitted claims on their own behalf, though some mentioned their late husbands in their statements. In 167 individual claims identified as linked to women as either claimant or final administrator, women representing themselves account for 105 of the claims. The remaining 62 claims were inherited by women whose husbands died sometime between the initial claims made in 1815-16 and the final payments made in 1824-25. In all these cases, the records indicate that the commissioners did not subdivide property or compensation based on the principle of a one-third dower for widows. For the purposes of remunerating inhabitants for property lost during the war, the BCL operated as though widows inherited all their late husband's property and thus deserved to be paid the entire awarded reimbursement.

Although widows were considered eligible to receive 100% of their awards, changes to their marital status during or after the claims process affected their ownership of the property they had temporarily gained. In 1816, Catherine Thompson and Thomas Pool both submitted separate claims to the board in the Western District. By 1823, they had married and submitted a joint claim that included both of their previous claims. They received a voucher for £13/5s in February 1825 and a supplementary payment of £5/6s in March. Catherine's marriage to Thomas meant that the payment for property she lost became his property under coverture, even if he allowed her to retain control of the £9/16s that the board had awarded. At least eleven women awarded compensation for

their claims remarried before receiving payment, a remarriage rate of 6.7%. Because the records of the BCL concerning individual claimants only extend through 1826, it is unknown whether more of these widows remarried in the decades that followed and whether they retained any control over the property they had fought to recover.

Another factor that determined whether widows received and controlled the compensation on their claims was the age of their eldest sons. If her children were not of age when her husband died, a widow often took control of all property until her husband's male heir was old enough to inherit. In the decade that elapsed between submitting their initial claim and receiving final payments, a small number of widows had to deal with changes in their estate due to sons reaching the age of majority. Elizabeth Campbell's son Edward became heir to his father's estate between 1816 and 1823, so mother and son divided the earlier claim for the entire estate into two separate claims. Edward was given ownership of the house and other buildings on the family lot that had been burned in 1813, making his claim worth £405. Elizabeth retained her claim for household goods totaling about £120.²⁶⁵ This unusual case was relatively simple to unravel because both claims were filed together and referred to one another. The interpersonal relationships behind other claims are not so easy to understand. In 1824, Dominique Pouget and his agent Charles Richardson resubmitted a claim initially filed by his father, Joseph, in 1816. The signature on the voucher for the claim, however, was that of Thomas Clark, an agent for Dominique's mother, Josette. This case is unique among

²⁶⁵ Campbell, Claim No. 174; Edward Campbell, Claim No. 175. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

the 167 claims with female claimants or administrators. Did Dominique and Josette both seek payment on Joseph's claim? Was the ownership of the property and claim contested? Unfortunately, the records of the BCL do not provide clarifying information. Yet the Pouget and Campbell cases indicate that widows seeking compensation for their wartime losses had to consider and possibly plan for a time when their sons would inherit the lost property and associated award.

Whether they later remarried or dealt with other male heirs or not, women who submitted claims to the Board for compensation appeared comfortable using the same approaches as male claimants in making their cases. In the 167 claims by women analyzed in this study, nearly all included the same elements as claims submitted by men: 1) a statement made under oath before a justice of the peace outlining the general facts of their claim; 2) an itemized list of articles taken or destroyed, with values; and 3) evidence given by neighbors or relatives in support of their ownership of the articles and the loss thereof. Many of the statements by claimants follow a pattern similar to the one given by Ann Graham:

I Ann Graham of the Township of Bertie do hereby solemnly declare that I have actually sustained the damage in the accompanying claim set forth and that I have not received any remuneration whatever either from His Majesty's Government or from the Individual who committed the damage claimed for or from any person or persons for them.²⁶⁶

These formulaic statements were likely prepared by the justice and signed or marked by the claimant, but some were customized to include pertinent details of their

²⁶⁶ Ann Graham, Claim No. 770. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3749, File 3, 1823.

cases. Catherine Lowell's statement explained that her losses were "sustained when Plundered and Burnt by a Party of the Enemy under the Command of General Brown on or about the 16th of July 1814."²⁶⁷ Some of the documents submitted, particularly those sent to government officials or the earlier boards in 1815, were more personal in nature. In 1814, Elizabeth Campbell sent a letter to Sir Gordon Drummond detailing the loss of her husband and her home, asking if he might "perceive the extent of her misfortune, and afford her, if possible, some remuneration."²⁶⁸ The personal appeal for sympathy in this early letter was accompanied by a more formulaic statement from a justice of the peace, a witness statement by three gentlemen of Niagara, and a detailed list of articles lost during the burning of Newark. Most of the claims submitted or resubmitted in 1823 did not include personal appeals for sympathy or descriptions of the suffering caused by losses, but were instead limited to the more factual, objective lists of losses and accompanying values that the commissioners preferred.

Unlike women who applied to the Loyalist Claims Commission after the Revolution, who "were largely insulated from the agricultural and business worlds in which their husbands engaged daily," women in Niagara demonstrated broad knowledge of both typically female and male worlds.²⁶⁹ Whether they lived in towns or on farms, they provided lists and values of household goods, farm equipment, crops, and other trade

²⁶⁷ Catherine Lowell, Claim No. 198. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 1, 1823.

²⁶⁸ Campbell, Claim No. 174.

²⁶⁹ Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 33, no. 3 (July 1, 1976): 397. Because the BCL did not need to provide compensation for land, it is unclear whether Upper Canadian women were more familiar with land values than Loyalist women, who struggled to provide accurate values for land they lost.

goods in remarkable detail. Mary Bunting of Stamford listed blankets, coats, vests, pants, shirts, and other specific items that were taken by looters.²⁷⁰ The raiders also plundered the homes of other Stamford residents such as Charlotte Carmichael, Elizabeth DeForest, Rachel Lundy, Jane McKerlie, Lydia Peer, Elizabeth Skinner, Mary Stickle, and Debora Wilson. The women of Stamford itemized the loss of a variety of household goods such as gold rings, silver buckles, beds, blankets, pillows, furniture, clothing, molasses, pots, rock salt, books, wash tubs, saddles, and buckets.²⁷¹ Whether they were present during the losses or not, in the aftermath each woman went through their houses and tallied the items that were missing, keeping those lists for up to ten years before having a chance to submit them and claim compensation.

Women who submitted claims for the contents of their homes that were burned demonstrated an even higher level of detail in their ability to recall the many items they lost and importance of each item in their lives. Although some women's claims simply listed the loss of a house and all its contents, others were painstaking reconstructions of their homes and possessions. Elizabeth Campbell's claim included line items for the house, stable, and other outhouses along with forty-six other kinds of items of which some were sets (i.e., ten table spoons). In addition to specific numbers of each item, she was also attentive to the characteristics of many items like the "Black Walnut dining Tables," "Walnut beds," and "Copper Tea Kettle."²⁷² Considering the extraordinary

²⁷⁰ Mary Bunting, Claim No. 215. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 2, 1823.

²⁷¹ Charlotte Carmichael, Claim No. 222. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3743, File 2, 1823.

²⁷² Elizabeth Campbell, Claim No. 174. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 3, 1823.

circumstances surrounding the burning of her home and subsequent winter journey to find refuge, Campbell's capacity for recollecting her property in such detail indicates that she was intimately familiar with each item in her home and hoped to receive compensation that accurately reflected her losses. Ann Butler of Niagara described the loss of her house and household goods as well as barns, sheds, and other buildings along with acres of planted crops, bushels of harvested potatoes, and thousands of fence rails.²⁷³ Hannah Secord, who operated a mill near St. David's, provided separate lists of damages done by British and American troops. The British had appropriated or stolen crops, animals, and equipment; the Americans had plundered her house, set it aflame, and raided her mill.²⁷⁴ These detailed lists and valuations indicate that women in Niagara were intimately aware of their property, regardless of the imaginary line between men and women's worlds. They also suggest that women recognized the importance of being accurate and precise in descriptions of their losses and were able to prepare such lists from memory even after suffering traumatic events.

Communities of Support

To meet the exacting requirements of the commissioners reviewing claims for war losses, detailed lists were only as useful as the evidence that supported them. The witness statements solicited and submitted by female claimants demonstrate the complex social network of neighbors and friends that women relied upon to support their claims for compensation. Seventy-one of the women who submitted claims from Niagara included

²⁷³ Ann Butler, Claim No. 64. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3741, File 2, 1823.

²⁷⁴ Hannah Secord, Claim No. 1275. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for War Losses, Volume 3753, File 1, 1823.

statements by other men and women whose testimony supported their case. Some claims include as few as one supporting statement while others include up to eight, with an average just under three (2.9) witnesses per claim. Like the claimant's own statements of loss, the supporting statements range in content from basic certification of the facts involved to fully detailed eyewitness accounts of events that caused the women to suffer.

Isabella McNabb included a general statement signed by two witnesses that is typical of those found in many claims: "We the undersigned are perfectly aware of the above loss being sustained by the widow McNabb, and we consider the sum which she estimates the loss at, to be fair and reasonable." She also provided a more personal statement by Reverend Robert Addison of Newark: "From the Respectability of this Claimant (whom I have known for many years) I have no Doubt that the loss stated above was sustain'd."²⁷⁵ To make her case even stronger, McNabb submitted two additional statements with more specific details about her property and losses. John Fletcher attested to the size and condition of her house and identified the perpetrators responsible for burning it, and carpenter Theodore Brundage made a fairly unique claim that a house like McNabb's "could not then or now be so built & furnished for the sum of fifty pounds."²⁷⁶ Her claim was successful, but the commissioners only awarded £40 instead of the claimed value of £50. With four different witness statements supporting the general and specific facts of her losses, McNabb's claim included slightly more evidence than

²⁷⁵ Isabella McNabb, Claim No. 1284. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3753, File 2, 1823.

²⁷⁶ McNabb, Claim No. 1284.

average among female claimants but demonstrates the various types of statements that women sought out to prove their cases to the Board.

A network visualization of connections between claimants and witnesses conforms to known settlement patterns but also allows two unique observations: first, many claimants relied on statements from men with influence or expertise. At the center of the diagram is a large cluster of connections between women who included more witnesses in their claims and men who provided supporting statements for several claims. The central cluster includes twenty-four women from across the Niagara District who are all connected to one another by witnesses who supported their claims. As might be expected, Niagara Township—in which the devastated towns of Newark, Queenston, and St. David's are located—occupies much of the central cluster. Other townships such as Stamford and Willoughby are visible in small clusters of two or three claimants. Within the large group of claimants from Niagara Township, men such as David Secord, Richard Woodruff, Robert Addison, Thomas Dickson, and William McKean lent their support to at least three claims each. As merchants, magistrates, and ministers, these men held positions of influence in the district that gave their testimony significant weight. Another group of men, George Young, James Tinlin, and John Monro, appear in the cluster because they were carpenters who provided expert valuations of houses that were burned. Their statements were invaluable in claimants' attempts to garner the highest possible compensation for their lost structures.

Second, physical proximity was not the only factor that determined who claimants sought as witnesses: race mattered also. The network visualization shows a lack of

connections between claimants and witnesses who lived in close physical proximity to one another. Mary Lee, Mary Jupiter, and the witnesses on their claims form a cluster that is separated from all others. The people in this cluster lived in Niagara but all of them were black. Neither Lee nor Jupiter had white witnesses provide evidence for their claims. None of the white women relied on the black witnesses in this group. Despite living in the same town, interacting in daily life, suffering similar losses during the war, and being equal before the board of commissioners, the white and black communities of Niagara remained separate in requesting and providing support for war loss claims.

War of 1812 Loss Claims - Niagara Network

This graphic represented female claimants from Niagara and the support network on which they relied in their application to the Board of Claims for War Losses

category ● Female Claimant ● Female Claimant/Witness ● Male Witness ● Female Witness

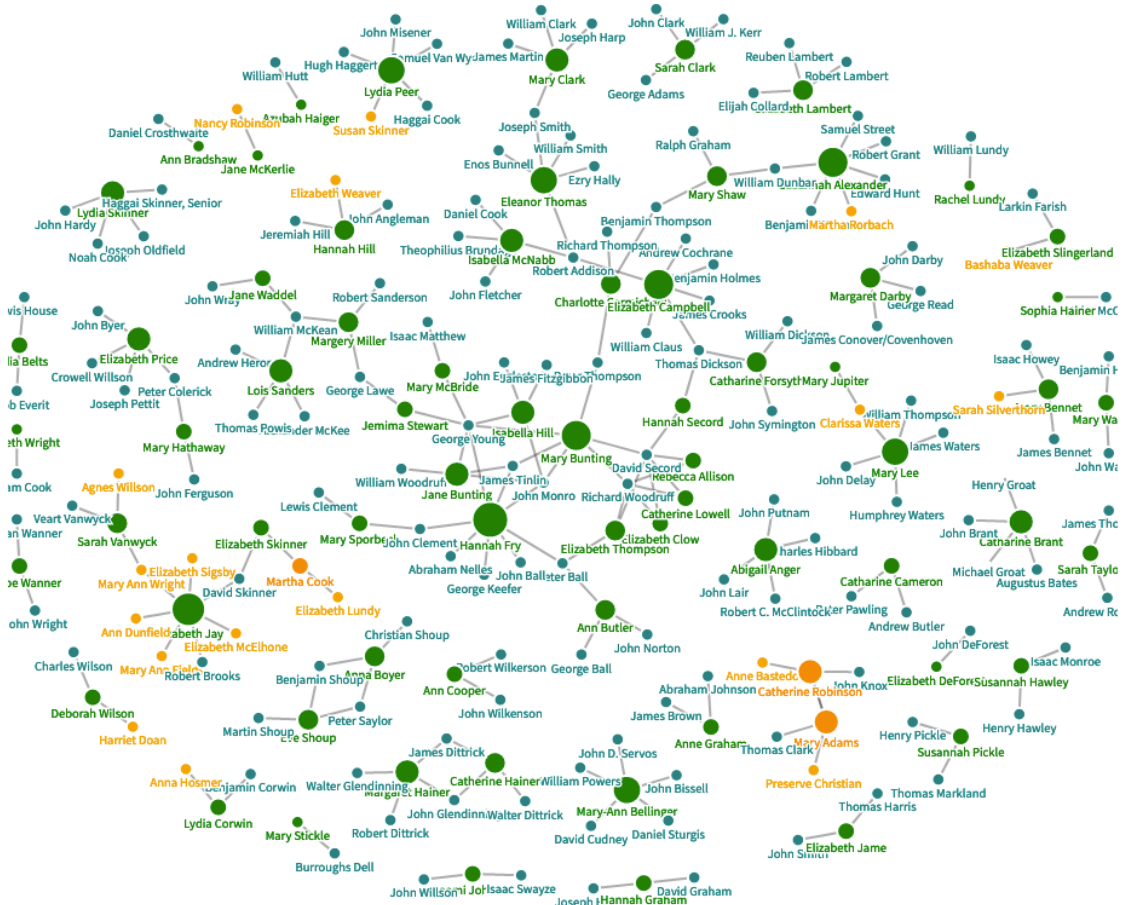


Figure 14 Network visualization of communities of support represented in war loss claims from the Niagara District [screenshot]

This is a screenshot of an interactive network visualization produced with [Flourish](#). In the [interactive digital version](#), each of the points representing claimants includes their township of residence and a link to additional information about the claimant. The points can also be manipulated to make the network connections more visible.

Surviving on Thirty-five Percent

After the war, women who had suffered losses that could be assigned monetary value took their place alongside male claimants to seek compensation for the theft and destruction of their property. Both white and black women worked with local magistrates to prepare their claims, compiled from memory detailed lists of articles taken and destroyed by enemy and friendly forces, and relied on personal connections to neighbors, friends, and acquaintances to gather and present evidence to support their claims. Despite the apparent separation between black and white communities of claimants and witnesses, claims were assessed against the criteria and received compensation without discrimination based on race.

Some women waited patiently for a decade while the government decided how to proceed with war loss claims, preserving documents and collecting evidence for later submission. For the most part, the women of Niagara were successful in their claims, with only three being deemed inadmissible. In total, women of Niagara claimed £24,067/9s/2d (about £2.2 million today) in losses through appropriation, looting, or burning.²⁷⁷ As the commissioners reviewed claims, however, they adjusted the valuations of the articles lost and sometimes omitted any items they deemed not admissible. The amount awarded by the Board to women in Niagara totaled only £13,949/6s/3d (about £1.3 million today). Even more painful than the adjusted values were the further

²⁷⁷ "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1270 to Present," *Measuring Worth* (<https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>)

reductions in payments due to difficulties in raising enough money to pay out the awards in full.²⁷⁸ In 1824, the government issued vouchers for twenty-five percent of each claimants' award. Over the next few years, the government distributed supplementary payments of an additional 10% on each claim, which most of the claimants received. This meant that in the end, the women of Niagara who successfully submitted claims initially valued at over £24,000 were paid just roughly £4,889 in compensation for their losses.

The crisis over the payments of war loss claims involved politicians and government officials battling over the future of the province but the delays, devaluations, and further reductions in payment severely impeded the recovery of women who had already suffered so much during the war. Compared to Loyalist women who claimed compensation after the Revolution, the women of Upper Canada received a much lower final payment on their claims. Although Loyalist women received a lower return on claims than Loyalist men (about 5.4% less on average), they were paid in full on their awards.²⁷⁹ In Upper Canada, the BCL made awards of approximately 55% on the losses claimed by women. But due to the lack of funds available to pay those awards, women received only 35% of those awards, a return of about 19.25% on their total losses. The postwar period that might have been made easier through satisfactory compensation instead required women to continue in their stalwart efforts to preserve their families and rebuild their communities.

²⁷⁸ For a more complete description of the claims compensation issue, see George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), chapter 8.

²⁷⁹ Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women," 394.

MODULE 5: “FOR HER CHILDREN’S BENEFIT”²⁸⁰

In 1824, Elizabeth Campbell and her children were living in Nova Scotia, thousands of miles from the community they had left behind and home that they had lost. Despite the time that had passed and the distance between them, Campbell contacted Niagara lawyer Robert Dickson to ask whether he might take her son Edward as an apprentice. She knew Robert from her time in Newark, having been close friends with his mother Charlotte and living in the Dickson home during the occupation of the town. Even though Dickson would have been seventeen when six-year-old Edward left Newark in 1813, they too lived together during that traumatic period and endured the bitter cold when soldiers set their town ablaze. Dickson replied with an offer to “receive the young gentleman for 5 years, take him into my own family and make him an inmate of the same during his apprenticeship” due to the “very high recommendation given of your son together with the former acquaintance of the two families.”²⁸¹ That same year, Edward Clarke Campbell returned to his place of birth to start his apprenticeship, which led to an illustrious career as lawyer and judge, a family of his own, and a lasting impact on the regrowth of the town and district. Unfortunately, Elizabeth died in 1825 and so did not live to see the fruits of her effort to make a future for Edward. Her perseverance during the war and determination to make opportunities for her children is a notable example of

²⁸⁰ From the description of Mary Shaw’s will in “Niagara Township Settlers ‘Sh-Sw,’” Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/niagara-township-abstracts/niagara-township-settlers-sh>.

²⁸¹ Robert Dickson to Elizabeth Campbell, February 2, 1824, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/1D721696-EBC5-42C4-B629-431999706269>.

how the women of Niagara were involved in the recovery of the district during the postwar years even from afar.

Although the War of 1812 caused extensive destruction and displacement throughout the Niagara District, women began to rebuild their homes, families, and communities as soon as the flames died, playing an important role in the large-scale effort to raise the district and province from the ashes. The previous modules have all focused on the experiences and efforts of women during the years surrounding the War of 1812, from the early settlement of the region through the distribution of compensation for wartime losses. This module argues that women's participation in male-dominated activities and additional work to preserve and support their families and communities did not end with the war but continued in the decades that followed. During this period, women contributed to the regrowth of the Niagara District in two main ways. First, women who petitioned for pensions and claimed compensation for losses participated in the postwar redistribution of wealth in the provincial economy by spending their reimbursements on rebuilding homes and farms, negotiating land deals to provide either growth or profit as needed, or pursuing other work in the widening variety of employment deemed acceptable for women. Second, many women used their personal connections to find opportunities for themselves and their children, ensuring that their communities—tested and strengthened during the war—would not only survive but thrive.

While most women in early nineteenth century Upper Canada had less representation in economic and political records than their fathers, husbands, and sons,

the War of 1812 created circumstances and unique sets of official records that brought women's participation in economic and social growth to light. However, the records of the Board of Claims for Losses and the *Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society* that offer a unique insight into women's experiences during the war provide only small glimpses into the postwar period.

Fortunately, some evidence of women's postwar activities can be found preserved in the claim records due to the lengthy delay between those events and the period in which documentation was collected. Fragments like an 1816 letter documenting Elizabeth Campbell's move to Nova Scotia provide threads and avenues of inquiry from which to reconstruct some women's experiences after the war. These few surviving pieces suggest that the end of the war did not bring an immediate return to safer and happier times for the inhabitants who had suffered grievous losses. Instead, the decades after the war were transitional as each person evaluated the circumstances in which they were left, determined the best way forward for themselves and their families, and then did the work necessary for recovery and growth.

Purchasing Power

While women had participated in the provincial economy prior to the war through their work in households, farms, and limited commercial activity, the War of 1812 created circumstances in which a greater number of women were responsible for financial expenditures and investments and therefore became more deeply involved in the postwar economy of the Niagara District. However, because few women who lived through the war left behind personal account books or detailed estate records, it is difficult to

establish a baseline of their physical and financial resources against which to compare losses and compensation payments received in the 1820s. The records of the Board of Claims for Losses provide the best available information about women's contribution to the economy of postwar Niagara District. The vouchers issued to claimants provide specific figures that help determine the amount of financial capital for which women were responsible. As previously discussed, the payments were limited to thirty-five percent of each claim. In 1824, the government distributed vouchers for 25% of each award, which were signed for by claimants or their agents. Over the next few years, the administration issued additional payments of 10% on the awards. According to the schedule of payments, 89 women from Niagara received £4,889 (about £446,300 today) in total compensation.²⁸² Assuming that the vouchers were fulfilled as promised and retained their value, these payments provided women with financial capital to use as they needed to supplement their current living, to rebuild homes, or to purchase land and goods to support farming.

The total amount of money distributed to women in Niagara was not evenly divided, however, because the government paid compensation at the same percentage across all claims, regardless of circumstances. For example, a woman who claimed £100 would receive £25 of her award, whereas a woman who claimed only £10 would receive only £2/10s, even if she was in a more difficult financial situation. Most of the women who submitted claims received less than £20 and some received amounts that were almost negligible. Hannah Clendenning received only £1/17s/6d, which would have been

²⁸² *Schedule of Payments*. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3760, File 1, 1824.

welcome but hardly life changing.²⁸³ Only thirteen women received payments above £100, an amount that would have been roughly sufficient to purchase a new house, barn, stables, and outhouses.²⁸⁴ Such a wide range in payment amounts meant that some women gained more financial power than others and could spend more on higher value items such as homes or land. Regardless of how much money each woman received, however, the decisions about whether to save the money, spend it on rebuilding a home or replacing stolen goods, or invest for their children's futures were theirs alone.

Some women in the Niagara District were in the position to use their compensation payments to rebuild the homes that had been burned during the war. After her husband's death in 1817, Susannah Alexander inherited her family's war loss claim for over £2,600 in personal losses and trade goods stolen. The couple had begun rebuilding their life after the war, which included their storehouses at Fort Erie and Stamford. In 1825, Alexander received over £515 on her claim, the second highest payment made to a woman in Niagara. Around the same time, she was working on rebuilding her house in Stamford, part of which had survived being burned during the war. The Alexander-Robinson House still stands today on St. Paul Avenue in Niagara Falls, Ontario and has been called "a cultural landmark of the area [...] intimately linked to the history of the Stamford village."²⁸⁵ The work of rebuilding such a house would have required purchasing construction materials, hiring skilled artisans, and furnishing

²⁸³ Voucher No. 280. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3760, File 3, 1824.

²⁸⁴ George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 123.

²⁸⁵ City of Niagara Falls, "By-Law No. 2014-142," Pub. L. No. 2014-142 (2014), Schedule B. <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/oha/details/file?id=4737>

the house with goods purchased from local merchants. Although we have no details about Alexander's finances, the survival of her home and its enduring legacy in Stamford suggests that she made a substantial investment in the local economy and thus contributed to the regrowth of the town in the postwar era.



Figure 15 Alexander-Robinson House, Niagara Falls, Ontario. Karen Whittle and Peter Hewitt, 2021.

Women's involvement in the rebuilding effort also included continued participation in commercial activities and land purchases. At least twenty of the women who made claims in 1823 also appear in various records from registers of deeds and township papers in Niagara as sellers, buyers, heirs, executors, and testators of wills. Some cases provide glimpses of the dynamic nature of rural life in Upper Canada. In

Bertie Township, Ann Graham purchased 100 acres in 1814 for \$1,000, resold them in 1816 without profit, and then bought 50 acres in 1817 for \$600.²⁸⁶ Without further documentation of Graham's life, it is difficult to know why she purchased and sold a large tract of land before finally buying a smaller lot. She had inherited a farm from her husband, and her war loss claim includes several farm goods that were taken or destroyed. Fortunately, she did not suffer the burning of her home or farm during the war. Perhaps Graham hoped to expand her existing farm but could not afford to work such a large holding and so settled for a smaller lot. Whatever her reason for making these deals, Graham's legacy persisted and the lot she purchased in 1817 still appeared in the Graham name on an 1862 map of the township.

Surviving evidence of Hannah Secord's life and business deals also provides an example of how women used their war loss compensation to fund expansion of their land holdings and suggests that some women successfully operated or reestablished commercial enterprises after the war. Various sources indicate that Hannah was operating the Secord family grist mill in St. David's during the war. The story of Laura Secord, her sister-in-law, includes the detail that Laura stopped at Hannah's house on her way to inform the British about an impending attack.²⁸⁷ The mill had been built by Peter Secord and operated by various relatives including Hannah, whose war loss claim includes a line item for ten bushels of wheat and one barrel of flour taken from the mill, along with

²⁸⁶ "Bertie Settlers 'G,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/bertie-township-abstracts/bertie-settlers-g>.

²⁸⁷ Alun Hughes, "Following in Laura's Footsteps," *The Historical Society of St. Catharines Newsletter*, December 2012, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://stcatharineshistory.files.wordpress.com/2021/04/hssc-newsletter-december-2012.pdf>.

many other items that were looted and her home which was burned.²⁸⁸ Her claim was valued at nearly £800 which the commissioners reduced to only £500 and then paid out only £178. It seems likely, however, that Hannah Secord used her limited compensation to help reestablish her mill operation, which provided a substantial income and allowed her to engage in land speculation that increased her estate. In 1824, she spent £120 on fifty acres in Grantham Township, which she sold in 1828 as two parcels, one to the Welland Canal Company for £60 and the other to Oliver Phelps for £150 (a total profit of £90). Around the same time, she purchased over 207 acres in Grantham Township from George Young for the sum of £850.²⁸⁹ Even without access to more detailed information about Hannah's life, these few surviving records suggest that she was significantly involved in commerce and development in the Niagara District during the postwar years.

²⁸⁸ Parks Canada, "Secord Mill," Canada's Historic Places, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=16359&pid=0>; Hannah Secord, *Claim No. 1275. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3753, File 1*, 1823.

²⁸⁹ "Grantham Settlers 'S,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/grantham-township-abstracts/grantham-settlers-2>.



Figure 16 Secord Mill, St. David's, Ontario. Karen Whittle and Peter Hewitt, 2021.

Although more research is necessary to fully understand women's participation in the postwar economy, war loss claim compensation payments provided a sudden increase in purchasing power to the women who had either made their own claims or inherited claims from relatives who passed. Women whose compensation payments were relatively low would have seen only slight improvement to their financial stability in the short term. However, even the median award of £12 (about £1,000 today) would have been a welcome increase in personal capital and allowed women increased opportunities to participate in the local economy. For those women whose payments were above the median, a substantial influx of funds provided the means for rebuilding homes and farms, exploring new business opportunities and land deals, and investing in their families'

future. Any amount of compensation above the median would have been sufficient to begin repairs or additions to women's homes, as one account suggests an average expense of about £10 per year on housing improvements was not unreasonable.²⁹⁰ Additionally, because most buildings were at the time "built and paid for in stages" by local artisans such as carpenters and masons, the money spent by women to rebuild or improve their homes was an "economic stimulus" that stayed in the province.²⁹¹ Most importantly, women who either spent or saved the payments they received were investing in the future of their families by creating a more secure housing situation, improving quality of life, or procuring more lands to provide income and stability.

Financing the Future

While few people would be surprised to learn that women in the Niagara District protected their children and provided for their futures, histories of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada have not considered women as integral to the community's survival. Nor have these histories recognized women's involvement in the region's successful recovery. Evidence from the lives of women discussed in this study suggests that their role as mothers was often extended to include providing for their children's financial futures. As Elizabeth Jane Errington describes in her chapter on motherhood, "for women in Upper Canada, motherhood was not an option but one of the inevitable consequences of marriage or, if unlucky, of being sexually active."²⁹² Many women in Niagara not only

²⁹⁰ Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 108.

²⁹¹ See Douglas McCalla's argument about the process and source of materials for construction in Upper Canada. *Planting the Province*, 108.

²⁹² Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 54.

had to endure the various stages from pregnancy to birth to raising to educating to sending children into the world, but were also the primary source of income for their families and had the additional responsibility of ensuring their children would be financially secure as they started out. Some women provided for their children through activities that were commonly shared by both mothers and fathers, such as finding and supporting suitable opportunities for a marriage or career. Other women entered less common territory by partnering with their children in farming and land ventures or providing them with land through sales or wills. In both situations, women were ensuring the survival and success of their families but also contributing to the long-term growth of their communities. Tracing the full impact of these women's actions through the growth of the district in the nineteenth century is beyond the scope of this study but the lives of a few women identified in the records of the Board of Claims for Losses provide evidence that women of Niagara were more involved in the development of the province than previously recognized.

One way that women provided for their children's futures was to transfer property and land through placeholder sales and wills. In 1839, Hannah Secord willed all her land in Grantham Township—over 200 acres—to her seventh child Richard H. Secord.²⁹³ At the time, Secord was seventy-two years old, had raised ten children who were all over thirty, and had already sold off her other land. While she undoubtedly continued to help the family in her final years, passing on her most valuable land was the last of her acts to

²⁹³ “Grantham Settlers ‘W-Z,’” Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/grantham-township-abstracts/grantham-settlers-w-z>.

be recorded in official registers. Since her death in 1841, six generations of Secord's family continued to live in the Niagara District and her descendants live there still.²⁹⁴ This story of family inheritance is repeated many times even within the limited scope of women who suffered losses in the war and sought compensation from the government. Some women simply sold property for profits to support their families. Isabella Hill had her agent James FitzGibbon sell one property in the town of Newark and willed another property in trust to be sold, presumably because she did not plan to return to Niagara after leaving during the war.²⁹⁵

Other women provided for their families by leaving them a secure place to call home. Some provisions were straightforward: Mary Shaw "willed for her children's benefit a house and Lot 150 in the Village of Queenston" in 1840, which she had purchased for £50 in 1826.²⁹⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, Jemima Stewart spent decades rebuilding after the war before passing everything to her children. About seventeen years after the burning of Newark, Stewart and her son Alexander Jr. built a new family home on the lot where their previous house had burned, likely funding the construction with some of the £98 she was awarded by the Board. In 1841, Stewart left to her two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret, both the property and house that which remains standing to this day on the corner of Prideaux and Regent Streets.

²⁹⁴ Susan Ruth Leitch, "Line of Descendancy from Stephen (Etienne) Secord UE to Susan Ruth Leitch UE," WikiTree FREE Family Tree, June 2013, <https://www.wikitree.com/photo.php/a/a0/Secord-27-1.pdf>.

²⁹⁵ "Niagara Town Settlers 'H,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/niagara/niagara-town-settlers-h>.

²⁹⁶ "Niagara Township Settlers 'Sh-Sw,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/niagara-township-abstracts/niagara-township-settlers-sh>.



Figure 17 Stewart-McLeod House, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Karen Whittle and Peter Hewitt, 2021.

Some women were even more involved in land speculation, buying and selling land for profits and long-term investments for their families. Jane Jones, for instance, made substantial profits from land deals that she later invested in property that she could

leave to her children. Between 1817 and 1820, she purchased several properties in the town of Newark and Grantham Township, which she later sold for a profit of £500-1000.²⁹⁷ She then used about £365 of those profits to purchase a number of lots in Grantham Township, where she built a home and lived out the remainder of her life. Prior to the war, Jane and her husband John, a tailor, lived in a large house in Newark and owned at least one other house, two stables, outhouses, and a large orchard of over 150 fruit trees, all of which was burned or destroyed during the war. The total value of Jones's claim was over £1,600, the third highest claim among those submitted by women from Niagara.²⁹⁸ Even though the commissioners reduced the award to just over £1,000 and the final disbursement was only £257, Jones clearly had a large estate before the war and likely had significant financial resources to help rebuild her life and engage in profitable land deals. Her successful ventures provided security for her family when she willed all her remaining property to her Executor in trust, including "all her estate and the property where she then lived."²⁹⁹

Making and Maintaining Communities

In addition to providing financial security for their families' futures, women in Niagara also helped their children find opportunities for both marriage and careers, which had the added benefit of stabilizing the growth of the district. Women's involvement in

²⁹⁷ "Niagara Town Settlers 'J,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/niagara/niagara-town-settlers-J>; "Grantham Settlers 'J-L,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/grantham-township-abstracts/grantham-settlers-j-l>.

²⁹⁸ Jane Jones, Claim No. 145. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3742, File 1, 1823.

²⁹⁹ "Grantham Settlers 'J-L,'" Niagara Settlers Land Records, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/niagarasettlers2/grantham-township-abstracts/grantham-settlers-j-l>.

finding suitable partners for their children—or at least their daughters—was common throughout the early settlement of the province, as “parents had considerable influence over their daughter’s choice of a mate.”³⁰⁰ Once a possible husband or wife was found, “the courtship was also supervised by neighbours, friends, and sometimes employers.”³⁰¹ For women whose husbands had died during the war, there was twice as much effort needed and likely additional pressure to identify possible marriages for their children to relieve financial burdens and create a more extensive support network for the family.

Without access to women’s own accounts of their involvement in their children’s future, we are left to examine family histories and make reasonable inferences about how women’s actions shaped their family’s legacies. Family genealogies sometimes provide details that hint at women’s involvement in identifying and negotiating marriage opportunities. An examination of the Corwin family provides insight into how marriages were arranged within a specific context of social connections. Lydia Corwin was born into the Swayze family, a large clan of German immigrants who settled in New Jersey and Long Island before relocating to Upper Canada after the Revolutionary War. Her husband Joseph Corwin’s family were United Empire Loyalists also from New Jersey. Joseph died at age thirty-two in 1807, so Lydia was without his support when she was looted during the war, instead relying on the support of Joseph’s twin brother Benjamin, who “advanced the money to redeem the goods & horses.”³⁰² When the war ended, Lydia

³⁰⁰ Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 29.

³⁰¹ Errington, *Wives and Mothers*, 29.

³⁰² Lydia Corwin, Claim No. 631. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3748, File 2, 1823.

had four children under the age of sixteen and would have relied on her extended family of Swayzes and Corwins for support. As her children reached marrying age, she would have played a part in finding suitable unions. Sometime before 1821, Lydia's second child Abigail Corwin married Jacob Garner. In 1828, her eldest daughter Mary married James Willson, whose family had also relocated from New Jersey. That same year, her eldest son John married Catharine Upper, whose father Jacob S. Upper had been born in the same town in New Jersey as Joseph Corwin Senior. The three families had relocated to the Thorold area after the Revolutionary War and their long connection likely played a role in their intermarriage. In normal circumstances, two parents would have shared the work of identifying suitable partners, making the appropriate connections with the other family, and possibly negotiating a dowry. In the aftermath of a war that took the lives of hundreds of local men, widowed women were solely responsible for ensuring the successful union of their children.

Women's involvement in finding suitable marriages for their children also benefited their own futures. John and Catharine Corwin had ten children together and provided a home for Lydia in her later years. According to the 1851 census, Lydia was living with John, Catharine, and six of their children. In 1861, she was eighty-three and still living with six members of the family, now the responsibility of her grandson Benjamin Corwin as the head of household. The Corwin descendants of Joseph and Lydia spread far and wide with branches from Niagara to California.³⁰³ The surviving evidence

³⁰³ "Lydia Swayze Corwin (1778-1863)," Find a Grave, July 8, 2015, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/148858850/lydia-corwin>.

of Lydia's family tree should not be taken to suggest that she is solely responsible for the subsequent success and expansion of the family. However, her role as leader of the family during and after the war undoubtedly shaped the lives of her children and her actions helped ensure that they found suitable marriages that would benefit themselves, their family, and the rest of the community. Corwin's life is more visible than other women's in part because she lived a long life and was documented in mid-century censuses but provides an insightful example of how the women of Niagara created and reinforced community connections through family marriages.

There is some limited evidence that during the postwar period women also identified and negotiated work opportunities for their children—a role that was more likely filled by fathers throughout the nineteenth century. The case of Elizabeth Campbell and her son Edward is the most insightful example of the long-term results of women's career-making but also demonstrates why so little evidence of these activities has survived. When the War of 1812 was ended in 1815 by the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, Elizabeth Campbell and her four children were on their way to Nova Scotia, where her parents and other relations still lived. Considering that Campbell had lost her husband, her home, and her youngest child in Niagara, most people would have understood if she had decided to leave the district and never look back. Once she reached Nova Scotia and found stability for her family, however, Campbell maintained relationships with former neighbors and friends in Upper Canada. Those connections proved valuable in making her war loss claim in 1823 but were also useful to her goal of providing a career for her son.

A pair of letters preserved in the Niagara Historical Society and Museum between Elizabeth Campbell, Edward Campbell, and Robert Dickson demonstrate the community connections she used to create an opportunity for her son and show that she used her war loss compensation to fund his future. After Edward graduated from King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia, Campbell arranged an apprenticeship with Niagara lawyer Robert Dickson, son of her friend Charlotte with whom she had sheltered during the war. With help from his father, Dickson was helping to rebuild the town after its devastation during the war.³⁰⁴ Instead of the usual procedure of charging a high initial apprenticeship fee, Dickson proposed to take Edward into his home and make him part of the family and business in return for an annual fee. He also discussed the close connection between the two families, writing, "I mentioned my intended proposition to my father and he approved it from a partial recollection of your son and his acquaintance with you."³⁰⁵ In the only letter undeniably written by Campbell herself, she wrote to Edward, "I am sensible it is much to your advantage to be in Mr D family & I the more cheerfully accepted his offer on this account."³⁰⁶ Despite the years and distance separating them, Campbell was able to draw on existing relationships with the Dickson family to provide an opportunity for her son that would ultimately shape the regrowth of the community, town, and district during the mid-nineteenth century. It also appears that Campbell arranged to pay for the apprenticeship with the money awarded to her as compensation

³⁰⁴ In fact, Robert built a new mansion on the site of his father's brick farm house, which the American soldiers had gutted by fire. British soldiers then pilfered bricks from the remaining walls to make chimneys. William Dickson, Claim No. 5. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3740, File 1, 1823.

³⁰⁵ Dickson to Campbell, February 2, 1824, Niagara Historical Society & Museum.

³⁰⁶ Elizabeth Campbell to Edward Clarke Campbell, 1813, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/91846BD6-8875-46F5-A222-011224390929>.

for her war losses, as she wrote, “now that I see a prospect of the Board being paid by the losses, I am quite satisfied.”³⁰⁷ The money may also have been drawn from Edward’s own claim, which was separated from his mother’s and included only the value of the property that he would have inherited as eldest son.

Like many other women of Niagara who persevered through suffering during the war, Elizabeth Campbell deserves credit for her role in the survival, recovery, and success of her family, including her son Edward’s influence in the Niagara region throughout the nineteenth century. Although she died in 1825, Campbell’s efforts to provide financial security and career opportunities allowed her son to find success in his return to Niagara and create a legacy for the Campbell family. The only surviving letter—and possibly their final correspondence—from Elizabeth to Edward shows her love and determination to provide for her family. “I hope you will continue to write me often,” she wrote, “Write me all the news. I hope to see your hand improve. I wish I could set the example of improvement. Affectionately, your mother, E. Campbell.”³⁰⁸ Launched by his mother's efforts into a career in law, Campbell was called to the Bar in 1829 and joined Dickson's partnership in 1832. Like Dickson, Campbell built a new house on the lot where his family home had stood before its destruction in 1813. When Dickson retired, Edward took over the law firm and trained apprentices of his own. Throughout his life, he actively participated in shaping the community in Niagara,

³⁰⁷ Elizabeth Campbell to Edward Campbell, 1813.

³⁰⁸ Elizabeth Campbell to Edward Campbell, 1813.

serving as officer in the local militia and a volunteer fireman in addition to his work as a barrister.



Figure 18 *View of the Plumb House (Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario). Owen Staples, 1910. JRR 1242 Cab IV (Staples). Courtesy of Toronto Public Library*

The results of Elizabeth Campbell's effort to provide opportunities for her son also appear in Edward's ambitious but unsuccessful political career. His campaign activities indicate that he continued to rely on connections within the community that had lived in the district for decades and survived the war together. In 1836 and 1841, he ran for election to represent the town of Niagara in the provincial assembly with campaign

ribbons that displayed both his family's loyalty to the Crown and recognition of the changes taking place in the province, reading, "Campbell for the Town of Niagara. The Sovereign's Privileges. The People's Rights."³⁰⁹ After losing the 1836 election by only seven votes, Campbell entered a heated race in 1841 that was marred by controversy.³¹⁰

Traditionally, franchise was granted to male freeholders of land—even vacant lots—valued at 40 shillings yearly. However, once the town was given legislative representation separate from the surrounding county, owners of lots in the town were unable to vote in the election unless they dwelled on the property. Campbell attempted to remedy the disfranchisement of freeholders living outside the town limits by helping them erect buildings on their lots that would qualify as dwellings and enable them to vote (presumably for him).³¹¹ He won the election by two votes and took his seat in the legislature on June 14, 1841. The next day, however, electors from Niagara brought a petition before the assembly to challenge the election results on the basis that Campbell's scheme had illegally padded the voter lists.³¹² The committee appointed to investigate determined that Campbell's opponent had won the election after they discounted the votes submitted by freeholders of lots with suspicious construction activity, such as "a

³⁰⁹ Edward Clarke Campbell, *Political Banner*, Silk banner, 68.5cm x 5cm, Niagara Historical Society & Museum, accessed June 18, 2021, <https://niagarahistorical.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/8F98D9B2-48F4-4CC2-81CB-387990157941>.

³¹⁰ 1836 election results from *Sir F.B. Head: Return to an Address of the Honourable the House of Commons, Dated 21 April 1837, For, Copy of a Despatch from Sir F.B. Head, in Answer to Charges Preferred against Him by Dr. C. Duncombe, in a Petition Presented to the House of Commons on the 19th August 1836: Together with a Copy of Lord Glenelg's Reply Thereto* (The House of Commons, 1837), 177.

³¹¹ For more on the franchise in Upper Canada, see John Garner, *The Franchise and Politics in British North America 1755-1867* (University of Toronto Press, 1969). Chapter Eight deals with attempts to circumvent restrictions.

³¹² *Journals of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 1 (Kingston: Printed by Desbarats & Cary, 1842), 12.

small building 12 x 18 ft. erected for the voter at the Expense of the Candidate, a week before the Election.”³¹³

Why would Edward Campbell attempt to manipulate the election results in such a blatant and flimsy scheme? The most obvious answer is that it served his goal of becoming elected. But this strategy relied on the cooperation of freeholders who lived outside the town, the only people besides Campbell who would benefit. It is plausible, then, that this plan was a collaboration between Campbell and men from families with long histories in the Niagara District who owned property in town but lived elsewhere. Campbell was a son of Niagara, born in the early years of settlement to parents who were respected friends of families across the district. His mother’s efforts to return him to that community after the war had successfully reestablished those connections and ensured that Campbell could find support in those longstanding relationships. During early settlement of the region, petitioners often received land grants in the township as well as lots in the town. Depending on where they built their homes, they might have been ineligible to vote in town elections, despite having interests there to protect. Other inhabitants who owned property in the town but moved away to other districts were similarly ineligible.³¹⁴ Campbell may have worked with these freeholders to develop the

³¹³ Alfred Patrick, *Digest of “Precedents or Decisions” by Select Committees Appointed to Try the Merits of Upper Canada Contested Elections from 1824 to 1849* (Montreal: Printed by Lowell and Gibson, 1849), 50.

³¹⁴ For example, James Crooks, a merchant, trader, and mill operator who settled Newark in the 1780s, served in the militia and undoubtedly knew Fort Major Donald Campbell, Edward’s father, prior to his death in 1812. By the 1830s, Crooks was serving in the provincial assembly, lived in Gore District, but still owned properties in the town of Niagara. David Ouellette, “CROOKS, JAMES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 18, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/crooks_james_8E.html.

solution of regaining the franchise by building simple houses on their vacant lots. Although the attempt failed when the assembly overturned the election results, Campbell's political bid was emblematic of the deep connections to the original families that settled Niagara that Elizabeth had worked to develop and maintain during traumatic displacement and loss.

The Campbell legacy that Elizabeth helped establish in Niagara was defined not only in terms of personal success but also through Edward's involvement in the growth of the region during the nineteenth century. In addition to his work as lawyer and judge, Edward helped establish many local organizations and institutions, serving as president for the regional and provincial horticultural, fruit-growers, and mechanics societies and the local library.³¹⁵ He contributed to the building fund for a new Presbyterian church to replace the one burned by Americans during the War of 1812, and helped establish a telegraph office in nearby Queenston.³¹⁶ Upon his death in 1860, "an immense concourse of people from all parts of the County" attended his funeral, including all the members of the library, the Niagara Mechanics' Institute, and the Niagara Fire Department, and a resolution of sympathy was read in the Town Council.³¹⁷ A lengthy obituary printed in the *Niagara Mail* and reprinted in *The Upper Canada Law Journal* described Edward as "a man such as Canada possesses few equal, and the like of whom is not often found."³¹⁸

³¹⁵ W. D. Ardagh and Robert A. Harrison, eds., "Judge Campbell," in *The Upper Canada Law Journal and Municipal and Local Courts' Gazette*, vol. 6 (Toronto: Maclear & Co., 1860), 3.

³¹⁶ Janet Carnochan notes that many residents were listed in the records from both St. Mark's Anglican and St. Andrew's Presbyterian, but Edward may have become a Presbyterian while amongst his relatives in Nova Scotia. Janet Carnochan, *History of Niagara* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1914), 82.

³¹⁷ Carnochan, *History of Niagara*, 87; 148; 154.

³¹⁸ Ardagh and Harrison, "Judge Campbell," 3–4.

It also praised his contribution to horticulture and floriculture, “which he cultivated with unwearied industry, devotion and success.” Having fled the town with his mother to seek refuge amongst relatives, Edward Clarke Campbell returned to his birthplace, helped rebuild the community, and had a lasting effect on the district. His prominence in Newark also ensured that Elizabeth’s role was made visible when objects, documents, and letters from his life were preserved by the local historical society. Without her influence in making the opportunity and Edward’s own success, Elizabeth’s story might have remained hidden like so many others. Instead, Elizabeth’s persistence and resourcefulness brought her family back from the brink of disaster and resulted in circumstances that preserved evidence of her role in the family’s remarkable journey from the low point of a terrible night filled with flames to a restored place of influence and respect in the Niagara District.

Shaping Their World

The War of 1812 disrupted the lives of women throughout the Niagara District, forcing them to take on additional work and increase their involvement in social and economic activities to support their families and communities. Yet the end of the war did not bring an immediate return to the prewar status quo. In the wake of loss and displacement, women inherited sole responsibility for maintaining family estates, managing finances to create short and long-term stability for their families, and negotiating marriage and career opportunities for their children. While the goals of such activities were driven by intensely pragmatic personal or familial needs and concerns, women’s efforts made a larger contribution to the recovery of the district in the postwar

era. As administrators of inherited wealth and recipients of compensation payments from the government, women used their purchasing power to hire artisans to rebuild their homes, some of which are still standing today. Women who endured the harsh arrival of war went on afterward and expanded their farmlands, produced crops for local, regional, and distant markets, and invested in their family's future. In some instances, women operated commercial enterprises and participated in the growing mercantile system. Other women used their financial position to engage in profit-making land-speculation, accumulating wealth to provide security and stability for themselves and their children. By identifying and negotiating opportunities for their children, women also had a lasting effect on the shape of familial and professional networks in the district, the province, and beyond. While women may not be as visible in official records or histories of the postwar recovery, their activities were unmistakably integral to the processes of rebuilding, reinvesting, and reconnecting in the Niagara District.

EPILOGUE

*These are the things that test and try men's souls,
And show what leading principle controls;
And not the men alone thus did and dared,
But women fair and young, and old and silvery-haired.*³¹⁹

- Janet Carnochan, "Has Canada a History?"

Elizabeth Campbell's incredible and harrowing experiences during the War of 1812 were the inspiration for this dissertation. Between 1812 and 1825—the last thirteen years of her life—Campbell lost her husband, her home, her youngest child, and was forever separated from the community in which she lived. Her story raised questions about how a family could survive so much trauma and loss, travel such vast distances, and then become so respected and remembered in a town that had been reduced to ashes. The search for an answer began in the archives of the Niagara Historical Society & Museum with a few remaining documents and artifacts from the Campbell family, including the only surviving letter written by Elizabeth herself. These fragmentary pieces of evidence were preserved because Edward Clarke Campbell attained prominence and made substantial contributions to the growth of the town, district, and province. Yet even such scant records provided just enough information to illuminate how Campbell overcame these challenges with what one acquaintance called "fortitude and resolution." Throughout the trials she faced, Campbell demonstrated some of the possible actions that

³¹⁹ Janet Carnochan, "Has Canada a History?," in *History of Niagara* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1914), 301.

women could take to preserve their families and support their success. During the occupation of Newark, she joined households with Charlotte Dickson, preserving and sharing resources and support. When her youngest child was dying, she risked her own life to have the infant baptized. While seeking refuge after losing her home, she appealed to the Loyal and Patriotic Society for aid. When she heard that the government might provide compensation for war losses, she used personal connections to raise support for her claim in 1815 and again in 1823. Having found safety and security in Nova Scotia, she did not forget her community in Newark but relied on former acquaintances to provide an opportunity for her son to start a career and used money from her war loss compensation to fund his apprenticeship. And though she did not live to see Edward's success and rise to prominence, her work was rewarded by his influence in the regrowth of the Niagara District and recorded in the archives of Newark.

Almost too remarkable to be true, Campbell's story suggested that other women in Upper Canada with shared experiences might also have gone to extraordinary lengths to preserve their families during and after the war. The copy of Campbell's list of war losses preserved in the local museum led to the Board of Claims for Losses records, which contain a remarkable trove of documents that provide unique insight into the lives of women who suffered during the war. Similarly, her name appeared in the *Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society* alongside many other women whose shared experiences of loss and suffering were recorded and described in what may have been the only time that their names appeared in a print publication. The report and claims both indicate that the

Niagara District suffered more severe looting and burning than any other district and that women were dispossessed or displaced at a higher rate in Niagara.

The records that emerged because of the war include descriptions of loss and suffering but also contain details about experiences that can be layered to better understand how women coped with the war and helped shape the recovery of the district. When faced with death, looting, destruction, and burning, women took on additional work, joined forces with others, made appeals for aid, and sought compensation for their losses. Their communities were physically attacked and disrupted but in response drew closer together for mutual aid and survival. Following the war, women relied on their social connections to provide support for their war loss claims, to find suitable marriages for their children, and to arrange career opportunities. They used their loss compensation payments to rebuild their homes, support commercial activities, engage in land speculation, and create financial stability for their families' futures. As the inhabitants of the Niagara District began to pick up the pieces of their burned and broken communities, women contributed to economic and social recovery through practices and roles that were not unknown in the prewar era but took on greater significance when they became solely responsible for maintaining families, homes, farms, and businesses.

While some depictions of the postwar recovery of the Niagara District and Upper Canada tend to focus on forces and processes in which individuals are eerily absent, our understanding of how the district and province returned from the brink of disaster must include the people who made it happen. In his economic history, McCalla wrote that in the postwar period, "the provincial economy would develop along the lines already

established, at rates of population growth and land clearing already indicated, and with economic fluctuations that reflected the province's links with a wider world."³²⁰ This high-level view of Upper Canada's economic history is certainly necessary but also leaves one wondering who was involved in land clearing, population growth, and economic fluctuations. The answer is that both men and women participated in those activities to some degree but are nearly invisible at that level. For these two perspectives differ not in accuracy but in scale. For instance, a time-lapse video of building construction shows all the activity across the job site and helps demonstrate the growth at a macro level, but individual workers are invisible or seem inconsequential in the larger process. Yet without those workers the construction process would halt, and the building would never be completed. Although historians must simultaneously consider individual lives and broader contexts, the tendency to take a broad, all-encompassing view can easily become too disconnected from the people who contributed to the larger process even without knowing it.

Yet even histories that incorporate more individual detail and agency often misrepresent the people present in a historical moment. When the men and women who had lived in Newark returned to the ruins of the town, they immediately set to work rebuilding homes, barns, stables, shops, warehouses, and churches. In his 1896 history of Niagara, William Kirby wrote that the residents of Newark, "bore their losses like brave men, and courageously set to work to rebuild and restore the town."³²¹ Like many authors

³²⁰ Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 42.

³²¹ William Kirby, *Annals of Niagara* (Welland: Tribune, 1896), 215.

of history in the nineteenth century, Kirby ignored women's contributions and separated men and women's work entirely: "The men worked diligently in the fields and forests. The women made the house bright and happy with good housewifery, and ever a clean table cloth, and a bright fire in winter."³²² These characterizations of women were not true representations of life in Upper Canada in any era, but are especially inadequate for understanding how women experienced the war, responded to traumatic events, and contributed to the recovery of the province.

Women who lived through war during the early nineteenth century in Upper Canada occupied a position at the center of two different fields of historical research that to date have not been in dialogue with one another. First, traditional military histories of the War of 1812 have focused primarily on battles, strategies, military men, ships, supplies, morale, technology, and other elements of warfare. Large-scale overviews and even deep investigations of single campaigns often overlook the lives of people who were affected by and coped with the violence and loss created by war. When individual civilians are mentioned, they often stand in as representative victims of war's brutality, especially if they are women or children. Histories that situation wars within political, economic, or social context without mention of inhabitants living in war zones and occupied territories can strip away the humanity that makes all war intimately personal for those involved. While other conflicts have been studied with more attention to their effects on civilians and women and how they responded to moments of crisis, the War of 1812 has not received similar scholarly treatment.

³²² Kirby, *Annals of Niagara*, 83.

Conversely, social historians studying Upper Canada have paid much more attention to women's participation in the settlement and growth of the province during the nineteenth century but have not considered whether the War of 1812 disrupted or redefined women's roles. Françoise Noël's study of family life in early nineteenth century Canada provides remarkable details about courtship, marriage, parenting, childhood, and community but makes no mention of the war at all.³²³ Elizabeth Jane Errington's study of women's work in Upper Canada convincingly demonstrates that "work performed by women, as wives, sisters, mothers, farmers, craftswomen, mistresses, and maids was essential to the development of the colony as a whole."³²⁴ However, missing from Errington's work is any consideration of how women's experiences during the war helped redefine their participation in the growing province. The evidence discussed in the previous modules suggests that Errington's framing of women's work is even more fitting when considering women's wartime activities in saving and sustaining their families through traumatic events. While both studies are valuable contributions to the history of Upper Canada, particularly women's position and participation in the early years of the province, they fail to ask what happens to women and families when faced with death, plundering, and burning.

This dissertation provides a first attempt to bridge the divide between military histories of the War of 1812 and the social and gender histories of Upper Canada in the nineteenth century. I have drawn on the work of scholars in both fields as a framework

³²³ Françoise Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

³²⁴ Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 24.

for examining what happened when the women of Niagara were subjected to violence and terror during a war that was characterized by a senior British officer as a conflict between two “enlightened and civilized nations.”³²⁵ When the war brought looting and burning, women worked to preserve their way of life as best they could but also took on new roles to ensure that their families and communities would survive the war and regrow afterward. Some lives disrupted by the war returned to normal when the fighting ceased, but death and loss meant that other lives were altered forever. Women had always played an important role in Upper Canada’s socio-economic growth and stability, but the war created circumstances requiring women to take extraordinary measures that provided for their families, preserved their communities, and shaped the recovery of the Niagara District.

Further research is needed to trace more thoroughly the long-lasting effects of women’s wartime experiences and activities in the recovery and growth of the Niagara District and Upper Canada. The evidence related to postwar activity found in the records of the Board of Claims for Losses provides a starting point but lacks the scope and detail needed to fully understand the depth and breadth of women’s contributions. Additional research areas might include examinations of public memory of the war, how public policies changed because of the war, how women remembered and portrayed their own participation in the events of the war, how long the effects of the war lingered in communities, and whether women who took on additional roles during the war returned

³²⁵ Sir George Prevost, “Proclamation,” in *The Documentary History of the Campaign on the Niagara Frontier in 1812-4*, ed. E. A. Cruikshank, vol. 9, 9 vols. (Niagara Falls: Lundy’s Lane Historical Society, 1908), 115.

to former positions, continued in their newly defined positions, or inspired others by their example. The exponential population growth and rapid industrialization of Upper Canada as it transformed into the modern province of Ontario overshadowed the experiences of the inhabitants who lived through the war. Although the War of 1812 has been called a “forgotten war,” there are hundreds of books and thousands of articles about the war and the province. What has long been missing are the stories of women who survived, saved their families, strengthened their communities, and rebuilt their lives on the ashes.

TECHNICAL MODULE: A HYBRID DISSERTATION

Although digital dissertations remain uncommon in most history programs, they are part of an approach to historical scholarship that has been gaining recognition and acknowledgement throughout the field for at least thirty years. In *Writing History in the Digital Age* (2013), Sherman Dorn listed digital history projects ranging in date from the 1990s through the 2000s that used various technologies and formats including CD-ROMs, Google Maps, and Omeka.³²⁶ The presence of digital scholarship projects in humanities, history, and public history has increased dramatically in a few decades. Between 2007 and 2020, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) [Office of Digital Humanities](#) has awarded over \$66 million in funding for over 600 projects, including over \$11 million for 117 projects in the history category.³²⁷ In the emerging field of pedagogical approaches to teaching history in the digital age, history scholars and instructors like Mills Kelly are exploring “how the remix culture developing around and through new media is making it possible for our students (and us) to produce either new knowledge about the past, or old knowledge presented in new ways.”³²⁸

³²⁶ Sherman Dorn, “Is (Digital) History More than an Argument about the Past?,” in *Writing History in the Digital Age*, ed. Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, Digital edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 27.

³²⁷ These figures were generated using downloaded Excel spreadsheets of search results from the Funded Projects Query Form provided by the NEH. The first figure includes all projects in the Office of Digital Humanities category; the second figure includes the additional filter of all projects classified under “History: All.” <https://securegrants.neh.gov/publicquery/#>

³²⁸ T. Mills Kelly, *Teaching History in the Digital Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 12. See also sections on teaching in Toni Weller, ed., *History in the Digital Age* (New York: Routledge, 2013) and Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, eds., *Writing History in the Digital Age*, Digital edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

Across the discipline, faculty and students collaborate in classrooms on innovative pedagogical experiments that involve learning about history while contributing to ongoing projects that reach wide audiences, providing students with experiences that reflect the changing nature of scholarly work. Students studying Atlanta's history with Dr. Marni Davis at Georgia State University contribute to *The History of Our Streets*, which documents the history of the Georgia State campus and surrounding downtown neighborhoods.³²⁹ In the Public History Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), multiple cohorts of students in a local history research methods course have worked with curator Dr. Christopher Cantwell and staff at UWM Libraries to produce *Gathering Places: Religion & Community in Milwaukee*, “a living archive of Milwaukee’s places of worship.”³³⁰ These kinds of collaborations provide students an opportunity to learn about the past and engage with historiographical perspectives while contributing to a larger history project with a public audience, better preparing them for scholarly careers in the digital age.

From the moment I decided to focus my dissertation on the experiences of women like Elizabeth Campbell, I felt that the only way to present their stories was through a digital dissertation that would allow visitors to read my analysis and interpretation alongside the documents, images, data, and spatial context that represents their lives. At the time, no PhD candidate in history at George Mason University had ever built or defended a digital dissertation but the faculty, staff, and students of the department were

³²⁹ *The History of Our Streets*, accessed June 13, 2021, <http://sites.gsu.edu/historyofourstreets/>.

³³⁰ *Gathering Places: Religion & Community in Milwaukee* (Public History Program, Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), accessed June 13, 2021, <https://liblamp.uwm.edu/omeka/gatheringplaces/>.

working to create that opportunity for future dissertations. The early decision to focus on a digital dissertation was based on my experience working with digital technologies that afforded opportunities to expand how history is presented. Since that time, I have completed the traditional historical scholarly training and entered a career as a digital scholarship librarian where my daily work involves asking how technologies can be applied to scholarly questions. These additional experiences have confirmed and strengthened my view that digital technology has much to offer to the practice of historical scholarship. As a result, this hybrid dissertation contributes to historical understanding of the past as well as current conversations about how historical research is conducted and presented. I argue that historical scholarship at all levels—even dissertations—can benefit from technologies that facilitate engagement with source materials, exploration of content in linear or non-linear paths, interaction with layered representations of space, time, and stories, and explication of the work that underlies historical research and presentation in the digital age.

The digital components of this project have two interconnected purposes: first, they serve to visualize data compiled from source material and facilitate analysis and representation. In “Doing and Making History: History as Digital Practice,” Jim Mussel argued

It is the role of historians to make absent contexts tangible, to make the imagined virtual, in order to reconstruct the significance of material from the past. Digital technologies provide powerful instruments that do just this, transforming material so that it can function in new environments, exposing both unrealized aspects of this material and the unthought assumptions that have hitherto structured our

engagement with it.³³¹

In this project, some visualizations serve as analytical tools that provide a unique insight into the data. For instance, the [network diagram of claimants and witnesses](#) helped identify patterns within the Niagara District communities that were not apparent in the reading of individual claim documents. In other cases, visualizations aid in representing complex data that is difficult to describe in long-form prose. The [interactive maps and timelines](#) in this project bring together different elements to show how inhabitants' lives were affected by both time and space. In both roles, the network diagram and maps are presented alongside analytical and contextual commentary to help readers and visitors understand the data and the interpretations built into each representation. Additionally, the visualizations are connected with source material, which facilitates further exploration and potential for new insights. One of the drawbacks of print publication is that data and source material can be represented only in extremely limited forms such as static images, tables, and appendices.³³² This project makes source material and corresponding datasets available in a variety of forms that offer starting points for comparisons and future investigations.

³³¹ Jim Mussell, "Doing and Making: History as Digital Practice," in *History in the Digital Age*, ed. Toni Weller (New York: Routledge, 2013), 89.

³³² For example, George Sheppard analyzed the war loss claims in the mid 1990s using computer-aided analysis software called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) but represented that work in a series of tables and charts that obscure the underlying data. As a result, it is difficult to examine or address the assumptions made in his creation of the dataset. See the section on sources in the introduction to this project for more on Sheppard's work. See also Appendix C in George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 256.

The second purpose of the digital components of this project is to make visible parts of the research and writing process that are often unmentioned or obscured in traditional forms of publication. My work aligns with Sherman Dorn’s argument that “public presentations of history in the digital age reveal the extent of that ‘preargument’ work, often in an explicitly demonstrative fashion or allowing an audience to work with evidence that is less directly accessible in a fixed, bound presentation.”³³³ In addition to making an original contribution to our understanding of the past and contextualizing its findings in relation to other histories, this project also describes the process of collecting, manipulating, transcribing, and transforming the war loss claim records into a digital collection and various datasets while also making the final products available for visitors to explore further. These kinds of activities—collecting, organizing, and transcribing source materials—have long been a part of historical scholarship but rarely receive substantial attention in the traditional forms of publication.

Digital history involves new tools and techniques for accomplishing this work and affords opportunity to make evident the work that historians do to make the past accessible and interpretable. This Technical Module includes [a section about processing Library and Archives Canada \(LAC\) materials](#) that describes how documents written in the early nineteenth century have been made available in digital form on the project website. Furthermore, even though the project focuses primarily on the lives of women in Niagara and the materials they submitted to the Board of Claims for Losses, the entire collection of records and transcriptions is available on the project site and allows for

³³³ Dorn, “Is (Digital) History More than an Argument about the Past?,” 27.

future work to build on the same set of materials without requiring replication of the processing stages. This also allows for researchers and genealogists to access materials related to families in Upper Canada that have never been previously transcribed. Historians also have a responsibility to participate in the long-term preservation of materials in collaboration with library professionals, so the entire collection of records, separated into the more navigable series, has been submitted back to Library and Archives Canada.³³⁴

Processing the War Loss Claims

The primary source materials for this project are the documents submitted by inhabitants of Upper Canada to the British government to seek recompense for losses they incurred during the War of 1812. The process through which inhabitants submitted their claims is described in the Introduction and in Module 3. This section is focused on the processing of the compiled records from 200-year-old paper into digital formats and data sets.

The records of the Boards of Claims for Losses are currently held by Library and Archives Canada in a collection entitled “The War of 1812: Board of Claims for Losses, 1813-1848, RG 19 E5A.” The collection was originally organized into volumes and files containing:

- Registers
- Administrative records of the Boards hearing claims

³³⁴ The processed collection is available online but is still rather difficult to navigate. Board of Claims for War of 1812 losses [textual record, architectural drawing], RG19-E-5-a, Library and Archives Canada, <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/redirect?app=fonandcol&id=139215&lang=eng>

- Indexes, registers, and schedules of claims
- Claims
- Vouchers for payments, with schedules
- Duplicates
- Certificates and affidavits
- Powers of Attorney
- Register of receipts of payments

In the 1980s, the entire collection was microfilmed to provide researchers access to the material while protecting the fragile originals. In that process, 12.5 meters of textual records were translated into twenty-three microfilm reels and archivists added typewritten indexes, registers, and cover pages for each volume. These supplementary materials help researchers understand and explore the idiosyncratic arrangement of the original materials.

At some point before 2009, staff at the LAC digitized the twenty-three reels of microfilm and made them available to the public online. However, the digital files remain in the order and size prescribed by the microfilm reels. Each digitized reel on the archived web page contains up to 1400 individual files presented in an outdated viewer that loads each page of the collection as a separate PDF file. Because reels of microfilm were not coordinated to the contents of the original volumes, each digitized reel begins and ends on random pages. Although the indexes to the volumes are enormously valuable, they provide little help in navigating the digital microfilm reels. Ironically, searching the digital collection in its archived web page for claims and information

pertaining to specific individuals is more difficult and time-consuming than using the original paper documents, where the index pages would speed up the process.

To make these materials easier to search, read, and present, I developed a process to download all the digital files made available through the LAC web page, recombine them into complete microfilm reels, and then separate and collate them according to the original structured system of volumes and files. This process converted 20,000-30,000 individual files into 23 files based on microfilm reel into 158 files based on the volume/file structure. The newly recombined PDF files have been submitted to Library and Archives Canada and are now available through their newer [digital collections site](#) (which is improved but still difficult to navigate).

Digital Reconstruction Process

- For each digitized microfilm reel, identify the URL of the first PDF document.
 - Example: [url]/t-1122-00001.pdf
- Identify the total number of pages in that reel
 - t-1122 has 911 pages
- Using the python script below, generate a text document with URLs for each page in that reel
 - Example: [url]/t-1122-00001.pdf, [url]/t-1122-00002.pdf, [url]/t-1122-00003.pdf, etc.
- Using Automator for MacOS, download each PDF into a single folder for that reel

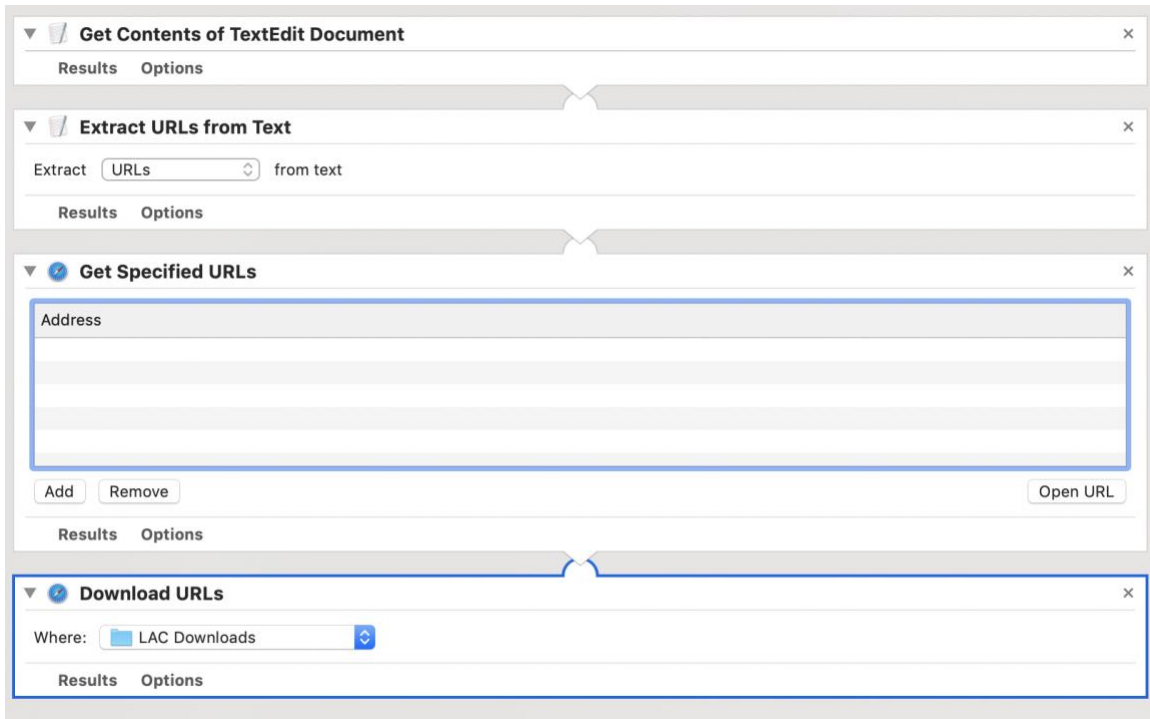


Figure 19 Automator workflow for bulk-downloading from LAC website [screenshot]

- Using Adobe Acrobat, combine PDFs into a single PDF document of 900-1300 pages.
- Manually separate reel PDFs based on original volume and folder structure
 - This stage was greatly aided by the index and title cards that archivists inserted into the microfilm to identify break points between the volumes and files
- Rename PDFs using naming convention derived from original structure
- Example: RG19E5-V3728-F1.pdf

Example of Process

- Input: Microfilm T-1122 - 911 separate PDF files

- Output: 22 files separated into:
 - Index
 - Register
 - Volume 3728 Files 1 to 6
 - Volume 3729 Files 1 to 12
 - Volume 3730 Files 1 and part of 2

Python Script

```
#LAC-downloads.py

# This script creates a list of URLs

# to download each page of the PDFs

# for each reel available on the Library and Archives Canada website

# Set start point to first page of PDF

n = 1

# Open temp file to store URLs

f = open("temp.txt", "w")

# Set upper limit to last page number of PDF

# can be lowered to create smaller batches
```

```

while(0 < n <= 6972):

# Set to url of PDF without the page number

url = "http://data2.archives.ca/microform/data2/dm09/d09/006003/c-11791/pdf/c-

11791-"

# adds the pdf file type to URL

suffix = ".pdf"

# extends page number to five digits

page = str(n).zfill(5)

# write each URL to the file

f.write(url + page + suffix + "\n")

# increase page number by 1 until limit reached

n = n + 1

# Close file

f.close()

```

Identification and Transcription

Using the newly collated RG15 E5 collection, I identified claims pertinent to my research by reading through various lists of claimants, including three volumes of registers (Register 1, V4357, and V4358), a schedule of payments (V3737-F3), and indexes to primary and supplementary vouchers (V3760-F1, V3763-F2, and V3763-F3). I looked for any names that could represent a female claimant, erring on the side of inclusion rather than relying only on typically female names. Using this method, I identified 167 claims that were either submitted by women or were later managed by women who were widows or executors of male claimants who died before the final payments were made. These claims represent 8.1% of the 2055 claims reviewed by the board of commissioners in 1823. The women represented in these claims were largely white Anglo-American women, but also includes three Black women and one Native woman. The women also represent a diverse cross-section of economic and social ranks in Upper Canada. Properties ranged from small owned or rented farms and basic dwellings in town to large estates with extensive land in the township. Women from subsistence farming families with little social standing submitted claims alongside women from the most influential families in the province. While reading and transcribing these claims, I found that most could be grouped into two categories.³³⁵

The first category includes claims made by women directly. In most cases, these women were either unmarried or widowed before making their claim to the board. Jemima Stewart submitted a claim for her losses that mentioned her husband Alexander,

³³⁵ For more on these claims, see Module 4.

who had died during the war.³³⁶ Only a few claims were submitted by married women whose husbands were still living at the time of submission, as in the case of Lydia and John Evans, a couple who operated a tavern in York and submitted a claim together in 1816.³³⁷ Lydia continued to operate the tavern while John was a prisoner of war and signed the claim documents in her own hand, which may indicate that she was both literate and active in their business and legal matters. Another couple, Catherine and Thomas Pool, submitted a joint claim in 1823 that combined two separate claims to an earlier board for losses that they incurred before they married.³³⁸ In another unusual case, Sarah Clark (unmarried) submitted a claim with her brother George, as they were apparently co-owners of the property that was lost during the war.³³⁹

The second category includes claims administered or re-submitted by widows or female executors of men who had previously submitted claims but died before the bureaucratic process was completed. These cases most often involve a claim submitted to the first board of commissioners in 1815 and a subsequent claim to the board convened in 1823. For instance, Captain George B. Hall of the Provincial Navy submitted a claim in 1815 for damages to his home and storehouse for his business. Hall died in 1821, leaving his wife Angelique to maintain their family and seek compensation from the government.

³³⁶ Jemima Stewart, Claim No. 256. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3744, File 1, 1823.

³³⁷ Lydia Evans and John Evans, Claim No. 76. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3741, File 2, 1823.

³³⁸ Catherine Pool and Thomas Pool, Claim No. 1795. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3757, File 2, 1823.

³³⁹ Sarah Clark and George Clark, Claim No. 1189. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3752, File 3, 1823.

Angelique petitioned the 1823 board of commissioners for a copy of the original claim and re-submitted a new claim.³⁴⁰

Once I had identified the pertinent claims, I began to transcribe the documents in each case. Although most claims are between three and four pages, some are much longer. Elizabeth Thompson's 21-page claim detailed a dispute between she and her son-in-law over property lost in the war. Her claim was produced in collaboration with four justices of the peace and three deponents attesting to Thompson's ownership and loss of the property. Thompson's claim is over 1,500 words, which is on the high end for a single claim. In total, the transcribed claims include over 60,000 words attesting to property lost, recording witness testimony, and appealing to the board of commissioners for adequate compensation.

Creating Datasets

Having transcribed the claim documents, I began to extract pertinent details from the claims to produce datasets to aid analysis. For each claim, I identified the following information where available:

- Original claimant name
- Final administrator or recipient of payments on claim
- Township of origin

³⁴⁰ Angelique Hall, Claim No. 358. LAC, RG 19, E5, Board of Claims for Losses, Volume 3745, File 2, 1823.

- District of origin
- Initial valuation of losses
- Commissioners' valuation of losses and amount awarded
- Individuals who provided supporting evidence for the claim, including witness statements and valuations of lost articles

This information was used to produce [a dataset with points and links \(nodes and edges\) between claimants and individuals](#) who provided supporting evidence. This allowed me to create [a network diagram](#) of the connections between community members as represented in the claim records.

I also cross-referenced the claims with registers and paylists to identify the amounts paid out in the initial round of payments by voucher (typically 25% of the awarded amount) and supplementary payments (typically 25% for claims unpaid in the first round or an additional 10% of the awarded amount). The extracted financial data allowed me to produce a dataset that allows calculations of totals for amounts claimed, awarded, and paid. These figures aid analysis of the cost of war losses to individuals and in aggregate, comparisons between different categories of claimants, and detailed figures for the influx of capital into the district as payments were made. Because the figures are represented in British pounds, shillings, and pence, I wrote custom formulae in Excel to calculate totals based on the non-decimal system in which 1 pound = 20 shillings and 1 shilling = 12 pence. Halfpennies (0.5 pence) and farthings (0.25 pence) are represented as decimal pence for ease of calculation.

Example: the following formula calculates totals for three different columns (£/s/d), then uses divisors and remainders to re-allocate the totals for shillings and pence into the correct larger unit of money. For instance, £24067/789s/230d is expressed improperly; this formula converts it to £24125/9s/2d (expressed as 24125/9/2 in a single cell).

```
=CONCATENATE(SUM(SUM(K2:K90),QUOTIENT(SUM(L2:L90),20),QUOTIENT(SUM(M2:M90),12)),"/",SUM(SUM(L2:L90)-(QUOTIENT(SUM(L2:L90),20)*20)),"/",SUM(SUM(M2:M90)-(QUOTIENT(SUM(M2:M90),12)*12)))
```

This section provides technical information for the maps present in the project and descriptions of the creation process for each map. The maps were both created using Neatline, a plugin for Omeka, because it integrates with the Omeka platform and content, allows basic visualization of spatial data, and is suitable for both types of maps included in this project. Although Neatline is not specifically designed for choropleth maps that represent statistical data in discrete patterns, it has spatial markup features that can be manipulated to accomplish a similar effect. It also features an integrated timeline plugin to facilitate spatial and temporal mapping within the same frame.

Mapping Claims Across Upper Canada

After identifying and compiling claims involving women as claimants or administrators, I tallied the number of claims originating in each township to determine their distribution across the province. The [resulting dataset](#) is available on the project

website. Visualizing this distribution in an interactive map allows users to quickly identify the pattern of women's claims and explore further into each township's claims.

All the claims in the sub-collection are mapped by their township, with one major exception. Some claimants provided their location as somewhere along the River Thames, which flows from the headwaters in the interior of the province above London into Lake St. Clair in the Western District. As far as I can determine, there was no township or settlement by this name, so I have grouped these claims together and represented them by a line following the river's course.

The first step was to prepare the geographic representations for each township, for which I relied on the [Heritage Property INdex](#) (HeritagePIN) for Ontario, which includes the rough boundaries of each township in the province organized by present-day county. HeritagePIN does not make its spatial data available for use in other platforms, so I manually replicated the polygonal representations of each relevant township in Neatline. These boundaries are rough approximations that only sometimes match existing geopolitical spaces. Because the townships present in 1812 often determined later boundaries, however, many of the polygons follow existing roads and property lines. In some cases, I verified township boundaries by referencing maps of Upper Canada and its districts from the early nineteenth century.

The second step was to assign a color scheme to represent the range of claim numbers for each township. For this step, I used [Chroma.js Color Palette Helper](#), which suggests colorblind-safe palettes based on the number of segments required. The number

of claims originating in each township ranged from 1 to 37, with most below 10. I chose a color palette with six segments:

- 1 to 6 claims
- 7 to 12 claims
- 13 to 18 claims
- 19 to 24 claims
- over 24 claims

Based on these segments, each township was assigned a color. Because Neatline is not a spatial data mapping tool, it does not accept or interpret data to style the records presented on the map. Instead, I manually mapped and styled each township. I also created a legend to explain the color scheme and help users understand the patterns on the map.






<u>LEGEND</u>	
Number of Claims	Color
1 to 6	
7 to 12	
13 to 18	
19 to 24	
over 24	

Figure 20 Legend for choropleth map of female claimants by district

Upon clicking on any township, users see a pop-up with the number of claims originating in that township and a list of claimant names with links to the corresponding item in the Omeka site. This allows users to quickly explore the townships and access more information about the individual claimants.

This map is the first attempt of which I am aware to plot the spatial data present in the records of the Board of Claims for Losses (BCL). Although previous scholars have collated statistics from the collection, they have not mapped individual claims at any level. It serves to confirm existing conclusions about where the War of 1812 was most disruptive to civilian life. Contemporaries who lived through the war were aware that the Niagara District was a principal battleground and that its inhabitants suffered from the actions fought there. Their views were informed by personal experience, witness accounts, or stories that circulated in Upper Canada. Historians with access to a wider range of sources and a broader perspective have confirmed those early conclusions.

This map demonstrates the concentration of claims for war losses in the Niagara District, further supporting the view that the higher number of military actions in the region caused greater losses and deprivation for its inhabitants. Future studies with an expanded focus that includes all the claims submitted to the BCL might support this perspective but might also suggest alternative interpretations of the war's impact on civilians in Upper Canada. For more information and discussion of Niagara as a central point in the war, see [Module 1](#) and [Module 2](#).

Mapping Space and Time

As described in Module 2, the Niagara District was severely impacted by the intense and dynamic violence that swept the region during the war. Mapping spatial and temporal data related to military action and civilian experiences in the same interface allows users to explore the complex interactions between the armies and the local inhabitants.

This map was built using [Neatline](#) with the [Simile Timeline plugin](#). The map includes four main elements that are mapped spatially and temporally:

1. Claimant locations
2. Major fortifications
3. Major battles and skirmishes
4. Areas controlled, occupied, or contested

Claimant locations were extracted from their claims for losses. In most cases, these are specific only to the township or village in which the claimant lived. Where possible, further research identified more specific locations, such as lots within the town of Newark or structures still existing today. Sources for this information include [HeritagePIN](#), the [Niagara Settlers site](#), and [Niagara Properties on the Eve of War](#). Each claimant location has a pop-up with information about their losses, including the date and perpetrators (where possible). It also includes a link to the full claim and the item representing the claimant. The claimants appear on the timeline with as much specificity as possible, from a single date or month to a range of dates in which their primary losses occurred.

The locations of major fortifications were extracted from contemporary and modern maps. Each fortification is represented by a polygon showing its physical footprint. As a user adjusts the timeline, the color and description change to reflect which army controlled the fort at different times through the war. I compiled the dates of possession from various military histories. These graphics represent when and where both armies were positioned in relation to the civilian population.

The locations of major battles and skirmishes are represented by polygons indicating the area in which the engagements occurred. They appear on the timeline on the dates they occurred. I compiled the locations and dates from various military histories and maps. These representations allow users to see when and where the major engagements in Niagara occurred and how they correlate with inhabitants' losses in space and time.

The areas of control, occupation, and contest are rough approximations based on the primary camps and fortifications of each army at different times during the war. The locations of picket lines, scout positions, forward positions, and temporary camps are not represented. The status of each area is indicated by color and in the information in the pop-up that appears when the record is clicked. These representations show the context in which inhabitants of Niagara lived at different times from 1812 to 1815. They also help users visualize the spatial and temporal correlation between occupied or contested spaces and losses incurred by inhabitants.

Generating Network Data

In the process of transcribing the claims identified as having connections with women, I realized that some supporting statements were provided by witnesses who also appeared on other claims. This was particularly true of claims originating in the Niagara District, which was most heavily populated district in the province and most severely impacted by the war. These share connections indicated that there may be recognizable patterns in the claimant-witness relationships across all the claims.

To examine these patterns, I separated out the claims generated in the Niagara District, then identified and extracted named entities in the claims to create two separate datasets. The first is a list of entities, often called points or nodes, that includes a name and category indicator. All entities fall into one of four categories:

1. Female Claimant
2. Female Claimant/Witness
3. Female Witness
4. Male Witness

A larger analysis of the claims would include more categories such as “Male Claimant,” but this initial study focuses on claims involving women living in Niagara during the War of 1812. For the entities classified as “Female Claimant,” I also identified their place of residence to the township level. For all entities, I also calculated the number of connections between them and one other entity. This dataset includes 231 unique entities.

The second dataset includes a list of connections between entities, also known as links or edges. This dataset has only two observations: a claiming entity and a supporting entity. This dataset includes 204 unique connections. Both datasets are available on [the project website](#).

Generating a Network Visualization

Because the primary goal of this process was to highlight patterns within the group of Niagara claimants, I chose to use a web-based network visualization tool called Flourish. This allowed easy upload of data and customization of the visual elements in an interactive graphical form. Each entity is represented by a point (node), the sizes of which are determined by the number of connections (edges) between them and other points. The color of each point is determined by the category of the entity. The points are labeled with the name of the entity. Upon being clicked, the points representing claimants have pop-ups with additional information, including their location and a link to more information. The link leads to the individuals' item in the Omeka site.

The resulting visualization, which is available on [the project website](#), allows users to move points around to make patterns within the network more visible. It also uses color to indicate the categories of each point, allowing easy identification of claimants and witnesses of each gender. Finally, the links to Omeka items allow users to explore each individual's story more thoroughly. For more information about the patterns visible in this network visualization, see the [section on Community Support in Module 4](#).

Producing Print and Digital Editions

One of the primary challenges in creating a digital or hybrid dissertation is finding a workflow that can output a final product in multiple formats. University libraries almost all require submission of some form of print material to deposit in the institutional repository. In the case of George Mason University, a Word template provides guidance on preparing a properly formatted document. It helps candidates meet the requirement for content and format of the title page, other front matter, tables of content, section headings, figures, and more. While useful in meeting prescribed standards, these documents are not particularly accommodating of digital components such as interactive maps, dynamic visualizations, cross-linking between sections, or other elements common in digital platforms. Additionally, the precise formatting of the deposited dissertation is rarely appropriate for a digital platform and the textual content of a Word or PDF document cannot simply be pasted into a web page. Likewise, content written for a web page cannot easily be migrated into the format required by the library.

For these reasons, producing a digital or hybrid dissertation requires a workflow that does not prioritize one output over another because transferring from one to the other late in the process is extremely difficult. To solve this problem, my workflow relied heavily on a composition tool called [Scrivener](#) that facilitates writing, reorganizing, and citing without pre-determined output settings. Once the written content and citations are finished, Scrivener allows output to a variety of formats, including Word documents, HTML, and Markdown (among many others). This allowed me to export the content to a print edition to send to my committee members for comment and to prepare for

submission to the library. I also exported the text to a Markdown file which could then be translated into an HTML file using [Pandoc](#). I used this approach rather than a direct output to HTML because the latter includes style elements unnecessary for my needs. Finally, I copied and pasted the HTML content into the appropriate sections of the website.

This workflow is particularly useful because Scrivener exports footnotes to suit the output format. The Scrivener > Word process exports footnotes in the standard DOCX format. The Scrivener > Markdown > HTML process creates the required tags to facilitate in-page hyperlinking for footnotes on web pages. When changes to the content or footnotes were required, I made them in Scrivener and re-exported to both outputs, eliminating the need to translate between print and web formats.

However, this workflow does have some drawbacks. Comments and proposed changes made by external reviewers in the Word document cannot be automatically accepted and must be made in Scrivener instead. While not as efficient, this process does require close attention to the nature of each comment or change, which may be beneficial to some writers. The most significant drawback is that the Scrivener > Markdown > HTML process removes font styles entirely, requiring them to be re-added when copied into the web pages. This issue is most evident in footnotes, where resource titles are often italicized. A direct export to HTML would retain these styles but also include additional unnecessary styles. In future projects, I would likely refine the workflow to find a middle solution between these two approaches.

The two output formats both required further processing to complete the finished products. For the print edition, I followed the [guidelines provided by GMU's University Dissertation and Thesis Services](#). For the digital edition, I copied each section of the text into the appropriate exhibit page on the Omeka Classic site. Where appropriate, I replaced static images present in the print edition with interactive content or galleries of images. I organized the site using the [Exhibit Builder](#) plugin because each exhibit can contain sub-pages, HTML content, custom embedded content, integrated Omeka content, and built-in navigation aids. The site has eight exhibits, each containing the text for a single module. It also features pages for the network visualization and allows browsing collections and maps on the site. The search function provides results from the exhibit pages, individual items, and collections. The ability to search across the written content and collection items allows users to pursue their own interests on the site, such as a family name or locality represented in the claim documents. The site uses a customized version of the [Berlin theme](#) originally built by the Omeka development team.

Dissertations are a unique form of scholarship because they may take on a variety of forms (digital dissertations or performance art, for instance) but must always be accompanied by a highly specialized print document that meets the standards defined by the university and library. The length and content of the official dissertation object deposited in the library is unspecified, which means that the repository records for non-traditional dissertations might include only an artist statement or a summary text. In the case of this hybrid dissertation, the entire text is presented in two matching forms: one print edition in the library repository and one digital edition on the project website. The

workflow I developed to produce these two editions is not the only possible solution but was an effective way to reduce duplication of effort and circumvent difficult migrations between web and print formats. Future scholars seeking to produce digital or hybrid dissertations that take non-traditional forms while still meeting university requirements may find this workflow a useful template upon which to build their own.

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BIOGRAPHY

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